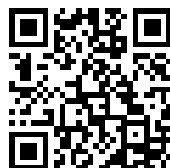


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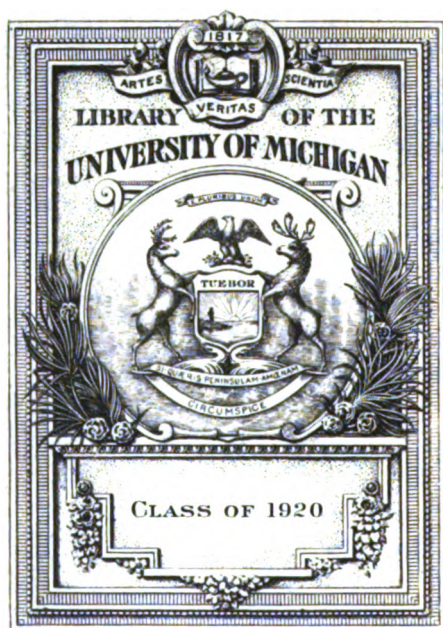
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# Guests of the Unspeakable



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# **GUESTS OF THE UNSPEAKABLE**

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# GUESTS OF THE UNSPEAKABLE

THE ODYSSEY OF AN AUSTRALIAN AIRMAN—BEING  
A RECORD OF CAPTIVITY AND ESCAPE IN TURKEY

Thomas BY  
T. W. WHITE



LONDON  
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**TO MY WIFE**

## **APOLOGIA**

**My excuse for putting a war story before the public at so late a date is that I feel that this gist of a diary recording the doings and sufferings of prisoners of war in Turkey should be published, if for no other reason than as a tribute to those who died.**

**The facts herein contained are true to the best of my belief and only the reported conversations may differ in words though not in meaning.**

**T. W. W.**



May 1920  
 (B.H.)  
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## FOREWORD

**T**HE conclusion of the Great War afforded me the opportunity, while the events of its closing phases were still fresh in the memory, to compile a brief and all too meagre record of the deeds and prowess of the men of the Australian Army Corps in France which it had been my proud privilege to command during that memorable and victorious counter-offensive which led, in the most direct manner, to the overthrow of our principal enemy.

But that story, thrilling as it was, by no means exhausted the record of performance of the young manhood of Australia during the great struggle.—Much remains to be told of the brilliant service of her sailors in Australia's fleet unit, and of the gallantry and devotion of Australian men and women in every other theatre of the war, and last, but by no means least, of the extraordinary contribution which Australia made to the Imperial Air Service, and of the remarkable standard of efficiency achieved by the men of the Australian Flying Corps.

No one was placed in a better position than I to appreciate the value and utility of the Australian flying squadrons whom I had the privilege of numbering among the vast military resources which it was my good fortune to have had allotted to me during the final campaign. They were the many eyes which sought and found all that needed to be known in order that victory might be planned and organised. No gallantry was greater or more inspiring than theirs. No devotion was more whole-hearted, no sacrifice more complete. The courage and skill of the Australian pilots became a commonplace in France.

But it was not in France alone that Australian airmen achieved a repute of high efficiency, or a tradition of sublime valour. In Palestine and in Mesopotamia the same tale unfolded itself. Indeed, it was in the most easterly theatre of the War that the foundations of these noble traditions of the Australian air-fighters were laid. The author of this book was an outstanding figure among the very pioneers of those intrepid Australian airmen. The performances of himself and his colleagues in those early days were all the more remarkable because of the comparatively primitive character of the equipment available to them as compared with that which could be

placed in the hands of their confrères in France some three years later.

Lieut.-Col. T. W. White, D.F.C., V.D., the author of these pages, and then a Captain in the Australian Flying Corps, was one of a small band of men who, as the story tells, embarked, in the earliest days of the war, upon an uncharted sea, who ventured upon unexplored arts of war, who launched out upon endeavours, the fruits of which were yet entirely ungauged. If he had been able to write only of the early beginnings of war flying, he would have had a story to tell which was well worth the telling and deserving of permanent record. But the cruel misadventure, which overtook him and his gallant companion during the performance of a feat of daring and enterprise which, during those early days, was still unrivalled,—a misadventure grievous in its results to them both—was but the beginning of a long series of strange, eventful happenings, compared with which the story of their prowess in the air pales almost into the commonplace.

This book is a narrative of personal adventure, which in its intense human interest, in its sustained tension, in its many thrilling situations, its pathos, its vivid realism, stands unrivalled. It is, withal, a plain unvarnished tale, abjuring the rhetorical or the flamboyant. It is convincing in its simple diction—entirely befitting the modest and unassuming character of the man who has set down this record.

It has been my privilege elsewhere to extol the military virtues of the “diggers” in the mass. I count it now a still greater privilege to be afforded the opportunity of writing these few lines to commend to his compatriots this simple story of the home-coming, through many vicissitudes, of one “digger,” whose record stands as typical of them all and is yet pre-eminent among them.

JOHN MONASH (Lieut.-General),  
K.C.B., C.B., G.C.M.G., V.D.

*Melbourne.*

## PREFACE

**I** GLADLY send a few words as preface for the book which is being written by my friend Captain (now Lieut.-Col.) T. W. White, D.F.C., V.D. Few people are aware that Australia and New Zealand were represented in Mesopotamia, and still fewer that Australians and New Zealanders were the nucleus of the Flying Corps formed in that country in 1915.

Arriving at Basra in April at the rise of the flood season that small party had first to battle with the ever advancing waters for ground for their camp and aerodrome. At one time, indeed, it seemed likely that air operations would have to be deferred for many weeks till the waters fell. But by untiring energy a tract of ground was held against the successive floods. Sheds and workshops sprang up and machines were gradually assembled.

The latter were of out-of-date type, even for those early days, and few arrived intact after their rough handling in transit from England and in transhipment at Bombay.

The Flying Park was quickly started and the inhabitants of Basra were soon gazing on the novel sight of aeroplanes making trial flights.

The first operations in which the airmen took part was the capture of the Turkish positions in the midst of the sea of waters at Kurna. I can well remember the exhilarating effect of the first Maurice Farman on the 31st May, when the attack was just beginning. This machine had flown up fifty miles from Basra across the flooded area and it passed like a bird of good omen over our heads to surprise the Turks by its reconnaissance of their positions and shipping.

On the following day, during the pursuit of ninety miles up the Tigris to Amara, the aeroplanes procured most valuable intelligence for G.H.Q. of the course of events and the progress of our own and the enemy ships. This was no easy task. Emergency landing grounds had to be hastily improvised on the few patches of dry ground to be found amid the waste of waters, which conceals the course of the Tigris during the flood season.

Soon after these events the Maurice Farman were reinforced by the arrival of two Caudrons from France. These machines, however, as was expected, proved by no means a success in the fierce summer

heat of Mesopotamia and they also found difficulty in coping with the powerful *shamal*, a N.E. wind that begins in June and blows all day for many weeks. The Caudrons were slow climbers, and before they could reach the cooler air at 6000 feet, their engines were liable to become dangerously overheated if flown between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Notwithstanding these defects, they had to be used, for want of better, and two Caudrons, piloted respectively by Major Reilly, Indian Army, and Lieut. Merz, Australian Flying Corps, flew 100 miles across the desert and Hammar Lake, from Basra to Nasariyeh on the Euphrates, on the 31st July. During the morning they co-operated in the battle which began at dawn and ended in the capture of that Turkish stronghold. This was a great exploit for such machines, but they had still before them the return to Basra. Reilly's plane arrived safely, but the other, owing to engine failure, had to land in the desert, far from all possible assistance. Here poor Merz and his observer, Lieut. Burn, New Zealand Staff Corps, were attacked and killed, after a stout resistance, by a band of marauding Arabs.

Captain White gives an account of the subsequent doings of the Flying Corps on the Tigris, in which he bore a distinguished part, but I feel I must add some appreciation of the services of the Australian and New Zealand airmen. Most of them alas! were lost with their machines or fell victims to the climate, and, like many other pioneers, reaped no personal rewards. But they led the way, and their services will not be forgotten by their surviving comrades.

As Chief of the General Staff of the Expeditionary Force at that time, I can safely say that none gained a higher reputation, both as pilot and observer, than Captain White, and personally I am indebted to his pluck and skill, for escape with another officer from a serious predicament on November 5th.

It was therefore with special feelings of dismay and regret that the Army Commander, Sir John Nixon, and his staff, on arrival at Azizieh on the 18th November, heard that Captain White and his observer, Captain Yeats-Brown, 17th Cavalry, Indian Army, had not returned from the extremely hazardous enterprise on which they had been despatched that morning.

Their intrepidity on that occasion was only equalled by subsequent determined efforts to escape from captivity in Turkey, which forms as stirring a tale of danger and adventure as any in the war.

G. V. KEMBALL, Major-General.

*Oxford.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE GENESIS OF "HALF FLIGHT A.F.C."

**T**HE outbreak of war found Australia making its beginning in the matter of aerial defence, with a small military Flying School at Point Cooke, near Melbourne, equipped with two B.E. biplanes and one "box kite", the latter being an early type of Bristol biplane, fitted with a fifty horse-power Gnome engine.

Flying being then the new toy of the service, I considered myself particularly lucky in being one of the first batch of four officers chosen from the Commonwealth Military Forces for instruction in aviation, in August 1914, transferring from the infantry with which I was about to leave for service overseas.

Our instruction, in the light of subsequent advancement in aviation, was decidedly primitive. There was no dual control. We flew only at dawn and at sunset, when there was no wind. Our labouring box-kite, capable of only forty-five miles per hour, was provided with no instruments other than a barometer, and lacked the enclosing fuselage and floor that give that feeling of security one experiences in a modern machine. The senses took the place of instruments. One's ears did duty as engine counters; the rush of air in the face told whether the climb or glide was at the right angle. . . . And as loops, spins, and even sideslips, were looked upon as decidedly dangerous and indulged in only by a reckless few, our tuition was certainly orthodox.

The great part aviation was to play in the war was not yet foreseen. For though we had developed pilot's wings on our chests after completing the tests required by the Royal Aero Club, we could find no active service openings where we might be usefully employed, as our Government at that time had no intention of sending a flying unit overseas.

Leaving our seaside aerodrome and its misty dawns to the



next batch of marvelling pupils, after having caught the real joy and fascination of flying, we sought glory elsewhere.

Lieut. Merz, being a medico, decided to go away as a regimental M.O., and I hoped to join the same battalion, that we might continue the comradeship formed in the Flying School. Lieuts. Williams and Manwell had also each gone his own way, and there seemed little chance of our seeing active service flying, when unexpectedly, in February 1915, came a request from India for an Australian Flying unit for service with the Indian Army in Mesopotamia.

A small formation of four officers and fifty men was promised, and Captain Petre, the English Chief Instructor of our school, was selected to command the little force, which was placed on the strength of the First Australian Division, and became known later as the Half Flight. At Petre's invitation, I again abandoned the infantry to be adjutant of the new force; Merz, who was keeping his hand in as assistant instructor at the school (a post that had been offered to us both), made a third, and Lieut. Treloar, recently returned with his brevet from England, was selected as the fourth.

Captain Petre having been obliged to leave for India, to make advance arrangements, it devolved on me to recruit the remainder of our personnel.

The N.C.O.s and senior mechanics were selected from the capable staff at the Flying School, and it was decided to recruit the remainder from the Training Dépôt of the Australian Imperial Force at Broadmeadows.

Williams was Adjutant of the Dépôt, his efficiency as an infantry instructor making him indispensable, much to his wrath, and preventing his inclusion in Australia's first flying unit. Yet that "chance de guerre" was indirectly to his advantage. For nearly four years later, when after many vicissitudes in the East, and long after the Half Flight had ceased to exist, I called at Flying Corps Headquarters in Palestine, my host was Colonel and Acting-Brigadier Williams,\*—his ability and efficiency having had an opportunity to assert themselves, when in 1916 the potentialities of aircraft in war had begun to be realised.

About three hundred volunteers had assembled on the parade ground at Broadmeadows, from whom I was to choose

\* Now Air Commodore R. Williams, C.B.E., O.B.E., D.S.O., Chief of Air Staff, Australia.



THE "HALF FLIGHT" ON BOARD R.M.S. *MOREA*.



"THE BEGINNER'S BUS." BRISTOL "BOX KITE" POINT COOK, 1914.





the fourteen mechanics, twelve drivers for mule transport, and other details.

Selection of suitable men from among so many was not as easy as might be imagined, for competition was keen and scarcely a man seemed to lack the requisite qualifications. Some wonderful stories of real and imagined capabilities for a life in the air were told, while some of the aspirants for the position of driver were more travelled than Marco Polo and possessed of superhuman powers with mules.

The keenness that prompted the stories, however, and the desire to leave for active service in any onerous capacity for some remote front, made evident the enthusiasm of the volunteers, and augured well for the future.

There was less choice among the volunteers for cook. Only two offered for the two vacancies. Nor did I realise till later what attributes—linguistic, temperamental and physical,—were necessary to the army cook. Nobody would have suspected the old man of the pair, of a penchant for flying, nor the youth who might have been his grandson, of musical talent. . . . Yet the latter surprised us by demonstrating his ability on many a tropic night spent later aboard ship or in fever oppressed Basra, skilfully leading the sing-songs of the men with his tuneful fiddle. We had not been a week in camp before we discovered that letters addressed to a mysterious Mr. E., of the Fly Depôt, were for our fatherly cook. A member of our mess learning that an injured aviator lay at the local hotel, lost no time in hurrying there to see who had crashed, only to find our chef, who had been sent to town to have a knife cut on his hand treated by the local doctor, comfortably installed, surrounded by an admiring crowd, who had been entertained between drinks, with the unassuming story of how the injured limb had been gashed through coming in contact with the aeroplane propeller while our hero had been considerably throwing biscuits from the air to the troops at Broadmeadows.

Such peccadilloes only endeared him the more to his comrades, for the Australian is always a humorist. The forcible repartee that was frequently wafted to us from the hessian enclosed kitchen, showed the cook and his henchman rich in vocabulary, and well able to deal with both banter and complaints.

Aerial joy rides for the most exemplary, served the double purpose of stimulating enthusiasm among the mechanics and giving us the practice in the air of which we could not have enough.

After two short weeks under canvas, spent in acquiring knowledge and being transformed from mud splashed dungaree clad nondescripts into tropically uniformed soldiers, we found ourselves sunburnt and fit, comfortably installed on a P. and O. liner, bound Indiadwards for glory or Kingdom Come.

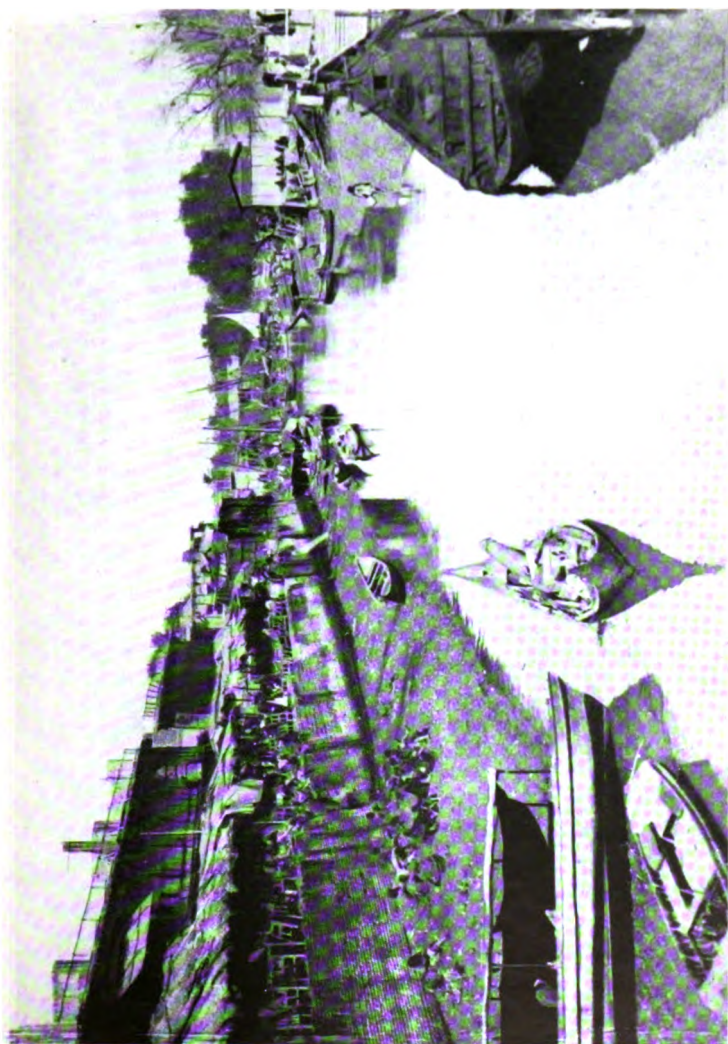
Colombo, with its tropical vegetation, crush of noisy natives, and panorama of palm shaded white walls and red roofs that crescent the harbour, was a pleasant relief after the long sea voyage.

A week in Bombay allowed much of a three months advance of pay to be spent. The oppressive pre-monsoonal heat engendered thirsts that would not be quenched. Taxis and gharries, scurrying through the streets at all hours within the twenty-four, freighted with helmeted and slouch hatted occupants, showed how the money went, and how the Tommies of the garrison were introducing the newly arrived Diggers to life and the sights of Bombay.

Orders were received that officers and mechanics should proceed to Basra, the base of operations in Mesopotamia, while the remainder of the personnel was to await the arrival of the mules and mechanical transport. (We had brought motor lorries, travelling workshops, and every description of stores,—the Indian Government having undertaken to supply the aeroplanes.)

Our transport, the s.s. *Bankura*, swarmed with crowded drafts of English Territorials, en route to reinforce the regular British battalions that formed a fourth part of every Indian brigade. And as the ship developed a chronic rolling movement and soon incapacitated the suffering sheep and cattle penned in the well deck, a call at Karachi, where more troops were packed aboard, was a welcome respite.

The Gulf heat was true to the reputation it had won in the days of Alexander. During six days that might have been a trial course for Tophet, we watched the shadeless wastes and barren coast hills of Persia slip by, till one early dawn the yellow hills melted into a palm dotted horizon, and we were



ASHAR CANAL, BASRA.







soon chugging along one of the many mouths of the Shat-el-Arab, the confluent of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The old fort at the mouth was already historic as the scene of the first shots fired in the war, between Briton and Turk. For on the day following the declaration of war with Turkey, the 16th Brigade of the 6th Indian Division, had landed and captured the fort of Fao under the covering fire of its gunboats, inflicting considerable loss on the enemy and suffering none themselves. Thus was begun the Mesopotamian campaign, which in spite of hardships and many vicissitudes, wrested the whole of Irak from the Turk.

The heavily fringed banks of the Shat-el-Arab are mere dykes during the flood season; for the canals which in various places are cut through for irrigation and transport, are allowed to spread their waters uncontrolled over the surrounding country, finding a way ultimately to the Persian Gulf, turning arable land to a waste of marshes.

But the view is pleasing at first sight. Masses of mottled-boled palm trees, form a dense jungle shaded by fanlike leaves, that allow occasional glimpses of shimmering swamps beyond. Untidy, half-concealed Arab villages, their squalor lessened by distance, nestle in the shadows. High masted *mahalas* and numerous small craft, hemmed in by foliage, repose in the most fascinating leaf-shadowed coves. Naked brown children run down to the water's edge, and armed, long robed Arabs saunter majestically to a vantage point, stare hard, and disappear once more among the date groves.

The novelty of the scene, the colour, and the strange primitive old-worldliness of vegetation, villages and people, live long in remembrance, even though hardship amid such surroundings and a surfeit of similar views, may subsequently detract from the original glamour.

Leaving Abadan and the huge reservoirs of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. behind us, we passed the Persian town of Mahommerah, standing back on the Karun tributary and looking pleasantly cool amid a waste of water and overhanging fruit trees.

The Sheikh of Mahommerah was a powerful ally of the British on the outbreak of war and had harboured the British inhabitants as well as a British gunboat and two coal-laden steamers that hastened there from Basra.

An hour or so later the Sheikh's palace at Basra, which he had handed over to the British as a hospital, hove in view, and like Sinbad returned from a voyage, "we did land at Balsora to proceed to Baghdad." How we proceeded there, and our adventures en route might have surprised even that doughty navigator himself.

## CHAPTER II

### BASRA AND THE GARDEN OF EDEN

**B**ASRA, variously spelt Bussorah, Basreh or Busra, according to one's phonetic fancy, in 1915 still sheltered such Codadads and Sinbads as one is apt to imagine lived only in the pages of the "Arabian Nights."

Itinerant carpet sellers, vendors of highly coloured sherberts, noisy water carriers bending under the weight of dripping goat skins, clamorous shopkeepers, haggling buyers, whining beggars and yelping mongrels make that babel of noise and medley of colour that is ever associated with an Eastern bazaar.

Scribes with reed pens, ink and sand, still squat on the ground writing love-letters at the dictation of amorous illiterates. Under ragged awnings that shade crate-like benches along the Basra creek, the wiseacres and indolents of the town sit cross-legged, sipping coffee and puffing many stemmed *narquiles*, just as their eighth century prototypes did in this same city, when Haroun el Raschid held sway in Baghdad.

High-ended *mahalas* with triangular sails, just arrived from Indian and Persian Gulf ports, lumber along the fairway and are poled to their places by sturdy boatmen. Slender canopied *bellams*, the gondolas of this Eastern Venice, flit swiftly from point to point, ferrying veiled Arab women or gaily clad Chaldean girls along the palm fringed canals. Roads were then practically non-existent and the *bellam* served as the taxi of the natives. The city and its environs are so intersected by canals which irrigate the date plantations that the country in the flood season appears to consist of a number of palm covered islands.

At the dawn of history the Tigris and Euphrates found their respective ways to the Persian Gulf by separate mouths, the mud brought down by the centuries building up this fertile region through which the majestic Shat-el-Arab takes its course.

Basra is the place where the dates come from. For "fierce heat above, and abundant water beneath, is indispensable in the culture of the most luscious varieties." And of the four million pounds worth of goods that was Basra's pre-war export, the eight million odd date trees contributed largely to that sum.

The fierce summer heat of Basra is accompanied by millions of mosquitoes that breed in the marshes, and even the odorous local Arabs who should be impervious, show their respect for the mosquito's doughtiness by sleeping beneath nets on their flat house-tops during the summer months.

Malaria is the greatest bugbear. A writer\* recently declared Basra to have "the most malarial air, the most choleraic water, and the most infernal climate of any spot in the world outside Tophet." Certain it is, that in spite of twice-daily "doping" with quinine, the enervating malaria and its associate diseases caused more casualties among the troops in the earlier stages of the Mesopotamian campaign, than the actual fighting.

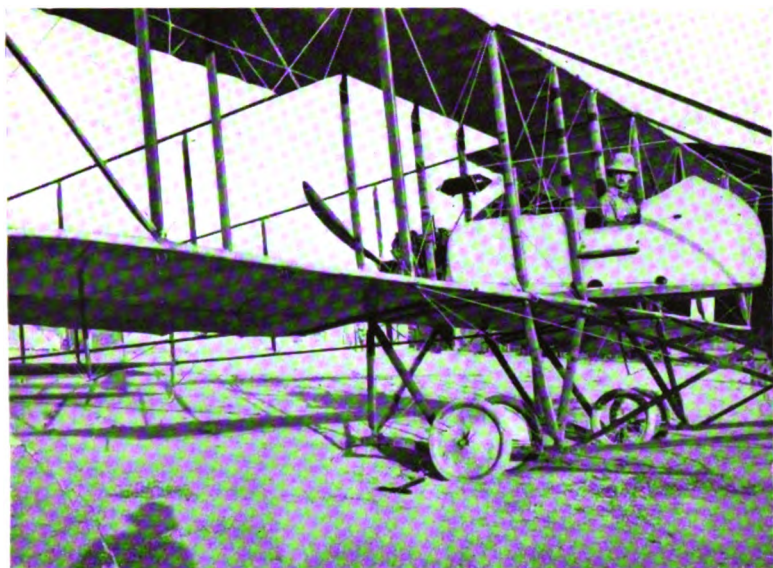
In the pageant of Eastern modes that crowd the bazaars, the khaki-clad Britishers appeared strangely incongruous. Helmeted Tommies, clad only in shirts and shorts, with spine pads and dark glasses to prevent sunstroke, rubbed elbows with sandalled and girdled Arabs, wearing flowing headdresses roped down with loops of camel hair, and who might well have stepped out of the pages of the "Arabian Nights"—carrying the old-world flavour with them.

In such a community an aeroplane was a still more startling anachronism, and seemed to the Arabs as well as to the Indian troops to possess the amazing and supernatural qualities of their mythical travelling carpets and magic steeds.

"Will you give me a picture of the aeroplane, Sahib?" a Mahratta subadar once asked me after watching a flight, "otherwise my relatives in India will not believe me when I tell them that I have seen men fly. They should know better," he reflected, "for we have read how the same thing happened many thousands of years ago."

We had laid out our first aerodrome and aircraft park on the site of an Arab cemetery, near a village bearing the euphonous name of Tanumah. The cemetery happened to be

\*David Fraser. "The Short Cut to India."



T. W. WHITE IN A MAURICE FARMAN "RUMPETY," MESOPOTAMIA.





the only available dry land during the flood season, for the Arabs bury their dead on the highest ground. After building a surrounding mud dyke, which needed constant re-building to fight the flood waters, and constructing a corduroy road of palm logs over the marshes to the river, we commenced the erection of three aeroplanes.

It would surprise and amuse airmen of to-day, to learn that the much despised Maurice Farman aeroplane, spoken of with good humoured tolerance as "Rumpeties", were the first to be flown on the Mesopotamian front, and were used on bombing and reconnaissance flights until the close of 1915. Two front elevator, or "longhorn", aeroplanes of this type and one "shorthorn", with not quite new engines of doubtful history, formed the nucleus of our heterogeneous force.

Our personnel too, was as diverse and unique as was humanly possible. English and Australian mechanics worked side by side with Musselman, Hindoo and Christian Indians, a stray Persian or two, and Arabs using tools of trade such as Noah used. A motley collection of Arab labourers and long-legged Sepoy guards were interesting supernumeraries, while a coal-black Baluchi, blessed with as many tongues as wives, performed the manifold duties of interpreter, castigator and general factotum. Our mess could not boast of similar diversity, nevertheless there were Indian Army, Australian and New Zealand pilots. For convenience in working therefore, we were grouped together, gazetted temporarily to the Indian Army, and known thereafter as the "Mesopotamian Flight, Royal Flying Corps."

Within four days of our arrival in Basra, our Farmans were assembled and used against the enemy on the occasion of the first drive against the Turks occupying the defensive positions on islands in the flooded region near Kurna, at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates.

This action, now spoken of as "Townshend's Regatta", was carried out by the Divisional Commander, Sir Charles Townshend, immediately after taking over command from Sir Arthur Barrett. The offensive proved to be a brilliant success, a huge stretch of territory, some two thousand prisoners, and many enemy ships falling into the hands of the British, with trifling losses to themselves.

From the air this unique battle was unquestionably inter-



esting. Arab *bellams* armoured with captured steel railway plates carrying twelve men apiece, with mountain artillery and machine guns on rafts in support, were sent on flank attacks against various islands in succession, being poled into action by their British and Indian crews. Meanwhile all available gunboats, as well as every ship and barge capable of carrying guns, assisted by field artillery massed among the palm trees of Kurna, concentrated a frontal fire on the objectives of the *bellam* attack, to cover their advance.

During the first day the most advanced islands were taken with little opposition. The second day was fixed for the assault on the main position at Bahran Island.

It took the dual-controlled "shorthorn" in which Major Reilly (Indian Army) and I left Basra, nearly two hours to cover the sixty odd miles to Kurna, so strong was the dust-laden *shamal* against which we flew,

The gunboats had moved to closer range during the night, and long before we reached our island aerodrome near Kurna we could see the smoke and dust-lined fringe of shell-torn Bahran rising up like a yellow mist in the distance. Kurna, squalid, straggling, and wreathed in smoke, looked mean and tiny beneath us as we moved off again. It seemed the very antithesis of what it had been, a Greek city of the Selucides and described by Sir John Maundeville in the 14th century, though no doubt with exaggeration, as a "city whose walls are twenty-five miles about."

Above Bahran, we could see through our glasses that panic prevailed. Tents were still standing but most of the defences seemed deserted, and troops were being packed aboard various craft on the river side of the island. In orderly formation on the eastern flank of the island the fleet of armed *bellams* was moving slowly but surely towards its objective. Two small gunboats, following a channel through the flooded waters that ran parallel to the Tigris, were making a demonstration on the western flank, and in rear of the massed gunboats that covered the *bellam* advance with their fire, a brigade of infantry embarked in ships, lay in readiness to be thrown in as reinforcements or to follow in pursuit.

Like a mammoth regatta, the not-easily-forgotten scene looked peaceful enough but for the gun-fire. And as the enemy defences were on the reputed site of the Garden of Eden, this

circumstance gave it an added interest, even though we saw nothing to identify it as such.

The Turks, surprised by a concentration of superior artillery, and bewildered by what appeared to be an extensive enveloping attack, coupled no doubt with the first appearance of aircraft, were leaving elaborate positions that they had held for five months, with only the merest pretence at a fight. As we proceeded northwards, we saw broad-decked paddle steamers, tugs with lighters alongside crammed with troops, *mahallas*, *bellams*, and every kind of craft that could be sailed or paddled, moving up-stream with the greatest possible speed, while a modern gun-boat stood by as rear guard. Following the course of the river to see if the alternative positions at Rotah and Maziblah were also being evacuated, and to locate the head of the retiring fleet, we found that as far as the vicinity of Ezra's Tomb, the whole Turkish Army was in retreat. On our way back to report, we dropped three twenty-pound bombs at the crowded decks of the paddle steamers, in each case going close, but evidently not quite near enough. We heard afterwards, however, that one of the smaller ships, seeing a bomb explode first in front of, and then behind it, and imagining this to be some aerial method of firing across their bows, drew into shallow water to surrender.

Gliding low over H.M.S. *Espiègle*, the flagship of the British ships, we dropped a message for the General, encased in a film tin with streamers attached, informing him of the Turkish retirement, and giving the location on the map of the nearest enemy ship. Very soon the artillery fire ceased, and the gun-boats followed in pursuit, steaming cautiously and keeping a good look-out for mines. Near Ezra's Tomb, the gunboat *Marmaross*, that covered the Turkish retreat, was unable to retire further owing to the shallowness of the river, and was soon engaged and sunk by the *Espiègle*. Amara was taken next day without a shot being fired, and with it many ships and stores, while 150 miles of enemy territory bordering the Tigris, fell into British hands.

Landing, and proceeding by launch to the *Espiègle* to report further details to the G.O.C., we met the R.N. Lieutenant who had picked up our message. He proved to be a fellow Australian and produced iced drinks that quickly made us forget the heat and exhaustion of the day's flying.

And such "straws in the wind" are we, that more than four years later I discovered that a naval officer, long table companion with me in a London hotel, was the self-same man. Unanimously we decided that Adam was a wise man, and had the tree of knowledge of good and evil been flourishing when we were there, we should have robbed the orchard ourselves to get away from so mosquito infested a spot.

## CHAPTER III

### OF BATTLE AND MURDER

**A**NY invasion of Mesopotamia from the region of the Persian Gulf, must necessarily follow the course of the Tigris and Euphrates, as a glance at the map will show. In the absence of adequate railways, water transport is a simple and effective method of carrying supplies . . . And supplies being vital to an army in the field, these rivers were arteries from which the army could not detach itself without disaster. Thus they decided the line of advance in the same manner as in Grecian and Roman invasions from the North, centuries before.

The fact that the Tigris and Euphrates run approximately parallel to each other for a great part of their course, gave strategic opportunities to enterprising leaders in much the same way as the campaign in the Shenandoah Valley in the American Civil War, gave opportunities to Stonewall Jackson.

The Roman Emperor Julian, when invading Mesopotamia in the fourth century A.D., marched his army to a rendezvous midway between the two rivers, so that the Persian Commander might be uncertain as to which river would form the ultimate line of advance. Similarly, Sir John Nixon, the Army Commander in Mesopotamia in 1915, based his army at Basra; and by alternate thrusts against enemy positions, after concentrating first on one river and then on the other, this little force of about twenty thousand souls, under the able tactical leadership of Major-General Sir Charles Townshend and Major-General Gorringe, fought its way, gaining surprising victories under extraordinary difficulties, for nearly three hundred miles inland, to within sight of Baghdad. That it should then be constrained by losses sustained in the sanguinary encounter at Ctesiphon, to retire to the strategic position of Kut-el-Amarah, where, with a few reinforcements the Sixth Division was

eventually starved into submission after a five months' siege, only make its exploits the more glorious.

Much obloquy has been hurled at the campaign in Mesopotamia and much blame attributed to the leaders. And though everything that has been said in the matter of insufficient and unsuitable ships, inadequate medical staffs and stores and obsolete aeroplanes is perhaps well deserved, such handicaps to the impartial observer, must make the achievements of the force appear the more creditable.

The disaster of Kut-el-Amarah led critics to comment on the campaign in Mesopotamia so severely, that the doings of the force prior to the siege were almost forgotten. Yet it is certain that in making a stand at the important position of Kut-el-Amarah, General Townshend, like Osman Pasha against the Russians at Plevna, prevented the Turks marching further southward in their determined counter-stroke. Though the already decimated Division was sacrificed, the siege of Kut saved some two hundred miles of territory to the British, from Kut to the sea.

The more important Gallipoli front naturally over-shadowed the Mesopotamian campaign, and at a time too, when the latter front was most successful. The abandonment of the Gallipoli venture suddenly focussed public attention on Mesopotamia and its beleaguered force, and aided by the entry of Bulgaria into the war, the evacuation of the Dardanelles campaign allowed the Turks to hurry forces to the banks of the Tigris, thus defeating all efforts to relieve Kut. Some little praise, therefore, is due to this force, which so early in the war freed Mesopotamia from centuries of misrule. And though they paid the price, their gains, the toll they took of the enemy and the difficulties they surmounted should make their share of censure at least no more than may be debited to victorious armies on more popular battle fronts.

The Turks, as well as the British, saw strategical opportunities in the parallel rivers, though they made only one serious attempt to exploit them. This took place in April 1915 when a force of one British brigade was holding the already mentioned Garden of Eden position near Kurna, and the Turks brought down a large force behind them along a branch of the Euphrates, threatening the British base at Basra. In this attack they were almost successful: only the doggedness of

the two British-Indian brigades that moved out across flood waters from Basra to Shaiba, routing them after stubborn fighting that continued for nearly a week, turned what looked like certain defeat into a decisive victory.

From Shaiba the defeated Turkish force retired along the Euphrates to Nasiriyeh, situated at one end of an ancient canal, the Shat-el-Hai, which connects the Tigris with the Euphrates at Kut-el-Amarah.

After the capture of Amara, following the already related "regatta" attack near Kurna, and the retirement of the Turks to prepared positions astride the Tigris in front of Kut-el-Amarah, the British force on the Euphrates was reinforced for an offensive on that river, and after careful preparation, a two days' battle, during a shade temperature of 118 degrees, resulted in the total rout of the Turks, the capture of many guns and over two thousand prisoners and the retirement of the Turkish Euphrates army northwards along the Shat-el-Hai to join their army of the Tigris before Kut.

In the course of the next two months followed the concentration of the British forces on the Tigris, the capture of the elaborately fortified Kut-el-Amarah position by the brilliant manœuvres and tactics of General Townshend, and the march towards Baghadad.

"Liberty of manœuvre" allowed a greater exercise of tactics in Mesopotamia, than perhaps on any other front. For with the fighting front circumscribed by neutral boundaries or the sea,—as was the case in France and Gallipoli, soon after the opening of hostilities,—there was no opportunity for Napoleonic battle tactics on those fronts. In Mesopotamia, frontal and flank attacks, feints carried out on one side of the river with a decisive flank attack following on the other, and all the brilliant chess-like manœuvres of open warfare—were possible and were carried out by the Indo-British force upon their less enterprising enemy.

In the capture of Kut-el-Amarah, General Townshend made such a display of force before the enemy position on the right bank of the Tigris by pitching camp and making a cavalry demonstration, that the enemy concentrated there to meet him. Then, marching his army back in the darkness across a boat bridge to the left bank, leaving the right bank occupied by a half battalion of Gurkhas in a strong redoubt—a long night

march enabled him to launch such an attack upon the redoubts of the enemy's left flank, aided by a frontal demonstration, that he brought about the retreat of the whole Turkish force, superior in strength to his own, but caught on the wrong side of the river, from positions naturally protected by swamps and marshes, and further strengthened by every artifice of war.

In this class of warfare the Indian troops were able to render a good account of themselves. They excel at marching: and though they do not possess the same fortitude as European troops for sustained trench warfare, they were able to withstand the tropical heat and march long distances with less fatigue. Inspired by the example of the British regular battalions which form a fourth part of each brigade, they would carry out their attacks with the utmost *sang froid*, extending, advancing under fire, and ultimately charging with the greatest gallantry, with all the punctiliousness of the parade ground or peace time manœuvres.

That the British battalion was a necessary stiffener to each brigade, however, was evident in the fact that the Cavalry Brigade, which was all-Indian, was the weak link in an otherwise efficient Divisional chain, and consequently imposed extra reconnaissance duties upon the already overworked Flying Corps.

It was at the time of the Nasiriyah fighting on the Euphrates that we suffered our first Flying Corps casualties. And though later we learned to regard such losses with composure—and losses were not infrequent, for all our combatant officers but one, eventually became casualties,—the mystery attached to the loss of the two most popular members of our mess in July 1915, the evidence of a gallant fight put up by them against an overwhelming horde of Arabs, and the uncertainty of their fate, made us eager for revenge.

Two recently arrived Caudron aeroplanes with eighty horsepower rotary engines, mere toys more suitable for a flying school than for active service, were used in these operations. One of them came to grief on the outward journey from Basra through engine failure, and was only salved with difficulty from the flood waters into which it had been forced to descend. On reconnaissances, and during the fighting of Nasiriyah, the engines, with much care, behaved themselves in spite of the high temperatures,—for heat and the dust-laden *shamal* gave



FIVE OF OUR MESS, BASRA. 1, CAPTAIN H. A. PETRE. 2, CAPTAIN T. W. WHITE. 3, LIEUT. CHRISTIAN, INDIAN ARMY. 4, LIEUT. G. P. MERZ. WASSIF.



INDIAN TROOPS IN MESOPOTAMIA.







our primitive air-cooled engines endless trouble and caused us numerous forced landings. The two pilots of the Caudrons did much useful work, skilfully mapping out the enemy position, and maintaining communication during the fighting.

It was on the homeward journey from Nasiriyah that the tragedy occurred. The pilots had agreed to keep each other in sight to the half-way island among the flood waters where tanks were to be refilled, but they lost touch soon after starting, and later both machines through engine failure were forced to land. Major Reilly fortunately landed near a village where the Arabs had heard of the recent British victory and were consequently sufficiently impressed and therefore friendly, giving every assistance to his mechanic in effecting repairs. But Lieut. G. P. Merz, my companion of the Flying School, with his pilot passenger, Lieut. Burn, by the saddest irony landed only a few miles distant near a hostile camp of nomad Arabs.

What evidence we were subsequently able to gather concerning their fate was circumstantial, excepting the rather varying reports of Arab eye-witnesses. It seemed that the two officers after landing were attacked by a large force of well-armed Arabs, before they had time to effect repairs. Keeping them at bay though armed only with revolvers, they commenced to retire in the direction of the refilling station. Killing one and wounding five others of their adversaries, they had covered five miles on their way, when one of them was wounded. His companion stood by him awaiting the Arabs, and together they died fighting.

No more eloquent testimony to their bravery could have existed than their aeroplane, hacked to matchwood by their infuriated enemies, which was found by a search party a few days later.

Merz, a brilliant medico and best of good fellows, had worked hard the night before his last flight with suffering wounded in a sweltering, understaffed hospital at Nasiriyah, and the laughing and likeable New Zealander Burn, had travelled as passenger on the homeward trip instead of returning by the slower medium of river steamer.

We had hoped they were prisoners, but found we had expected too much from the human jackals that roamed the desert in these parts. Though we scoured the surrounding

country for miles, we could not find the perpetrators ; and I had the personal disappointment and mortification of returning fruitless from a punitive expedition, that surprised and searched the Arab villages and camps in that neighbourhood.

But wherever on the limitless desert their graves may be, the spot needs no monument and is hallowed by their heroism.

In the rush mess hut at Basra we missed them sadly, and each wondered if when his own turn came he would die as nobly.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROAD TO BAGHDAD

**A**FTER the loss of our two comrades, long flights from the base to the front line were forbidden pending the arrival of better planes. On the last occasion that I left Basra to go northwards therefore, after a short and labouring flight up river against the *shamal* to a landing place, I was obliged to remove the tail from my Farman and load it on a broad-decked barge towed by a tiny captured tug.

Abbas, my diminutive Arab servant, was proud of his responsibilities as custodian of a *tiarachi's* kit. At Kurna, where we stopped to pick up petrol, he distinguished himself by peremptorily ordering an old blue-spectacled Arab with flowing henna-tinted beard, to *imshi*. This patriarch proved to be no less a personage than the sheikh of the town, and no doubt traced his ancestry back to Adam. It was amusing to see him meekly depart at the urchin's command.

Of Abbas' predecessors in office, Wassif had been wisely forbidden by his mother to leave Basra, and Abdul being half-witted, the precocious Abbas, who had been a mess punkah wallah, but for whom the Turk held no terrors, applied for the position, dressed in his most adult apparel. A large red and white spotted *sheffir* was fastened on his head by ropes of camel hair; a very dirty robe tied with a pale blue girdle tripped him up at every step, and a pair of cast-off white boots, many sizes too large, with the toes pointing skywards, completed his make-up. With amazing precocity he had learned a considerable amount of English, including a vocabulary of oaths that made him the envy of his small companions. He was not taken aback therefore when I told Bangool, the interpreter who presented him, that I wanted a man and not a small boy as my servant. "I can lift thirty-five — pounds," he answered for himself with alacrity. His eagerness and perhaps the more important fact that he was the only applicant, got him the job.

Each day as we toiled along the winding course of the Tigris upstream for Kut-el-Amarah, through country unaltered from Biblical days, past sleepy towns and fortified mud villages, the two Australian mechanics who lived with me under the shade of the aeroplane, exerted their civilising influence upon Abbas, teaching him to wash by throwing him daily over the stern of the barge attached to a rope.

The vicinity of Kurna, which a few months before was a waste of waters and the scene of the "regatta" attack of the previous chapter, was now transformed into flourishing fields of maize, each crop having a novel scarecrow in the shape of a rudely built tower from which Arab youths with an extraordinary skill threw missiles from sling-shots.

We entered the palm shaded town of Amara by night, and as our tug and attached barge chugged past the waterfront with the two mechanics vociferously singing "Australia will be there", the enquiring voices of Tommies called to us from the darkness "What regiment are you?" "Australian Light Horse" was shouted back by our humorist of the two. There were a few cheers. "How many are you?" came back from the shore. "About two thousand," fibbed the mechanic, whereupon there were prolonged cheers. . . . Strangely enough, this simple leg-pull regarding the arrival of Australian cavalry, but much exaggerated, was noised throughout the army, and even appeared in the enemy press. How we wished that the Light Horse then being sacrificed as infantry on Gallipoli were with us!

There are great possibilities for irrigation in Mesopotamia, for the copious waters of the Tigris and Euphrates are barely touched by the primitive water-lifting systems of the Arabs. Creaking, roughly-built *sakkias* with wooden teeth that rotate endless water-lifting buckets, and bullocks walking backwards and forwards on an inclined plane, lifting leathern bags of water from the river, are the usual system, and may sometimes be seen side by side with modern oil-driven pumping plants. Numerous ruined Persian and Assyrian canals testify to the country's former prosperity through the aid of irrigation. But enormous sums must be spent and many years elapse before prosperity can be restored and the blight of Ottoman retrogression and misrule effaced.

Our barge was taken in tow by a larger tug at Amara and

after being further encumbered with a choleric General and his numerous staff as passengers, we continued the journey to Kut-el-Amarah.

On occasional walks ashore during the next seven days, the General's browbeaten Aide and I, at a safe distance from the red tabs of authority, had ample time to observe these things and to ponder on the past and prophesy the future, while we followed the smoke of our tug and watched clouds of grouse pass overhead and partridges fly from almost every bush in a veritable sportsman's paradise.

Kut-el-Amarah, the shuttlecock of the Mesopotamian campaign, was dusty and squalid after its evacuation by the Turks. But in a surprisingly short space of time, it assumed a more orderly and sanitary aspect, incinerators smoking continually in the destruction of the vast accumulation of rubbish that marked the site of the Turkish camps. Guns lined the waterfront and helmeted British soldiers and puggaried sepoy in shirt and shorts, rubbed shoulders in street and bazaar with Arabs that a few days before had fought with the enemy or hovered on the outskirts of the battle to plunder the dead and wounded. In fact, a public execution of two Arabs caught red-handed robbing and killing wounded, took place a few days after the occupation.

Two brigades of the 6th Division had followed the Turks towards Baghdad, using every available craft that could negotiate the shallow reaches—and the march on Baghdad had begun. Neither the pessimist nor the prophet would have dared to forecast that Kut-el-Amarah would eventually become the site of the greatest disaster to British arms, and the scene of a long and memorable siege.

A small island in the middle of the Tigris, on which a recently arrived Naval Flight was camped, became our domicile during a week spent in flights towards the Persian border and down the Shat-el-Hai towards Nasiriyah and what once was Babylon. The reconnaissances were to endeavour to locate any Turkish forces that had not retired towards Baghdad, and to search for evidence of any concentration of enemy troops on the flank of our communications.

These tasks being accomplished and with the originator of the Light Horse rumour, as passenger, I left one dawn for Azizieh, ill-fated Kut-el-Amarah and the protecting loop of

river in which it nestled, soon fading away into the desert's dusty face.

Jimmy Munro, my excellent mechanic, newly arrived with a reinforcement from Australia, was as elated as a schoolboy and jumped about the cockpit or hung over the side with great elation whenever he saw Arabs firing at us. It was his first and last flight, for he was unfortunate enough to be taken in the surrender of Kut some months later, and although surviving the arduous march to Asia Minor, was one of the many who died in captivity. . . . And still another of the best was lost to us.

Aziziyeh, a mere cluster of mud houses on the Tigris about fifty miles below Baghdad, was hazy with the smoke of incinerators and the dust of moving animals. Outposts in redoubts that marked the corners of the camp were standing to arms, a signal squad was at practice, and long strings of horses and mules were being led to water. Five miles northwards at the next bend of the river was the nearest enemy position barring the road to Baghdad. Ten miles further on was a stronger position situated on an advantageous bend of the river which the Turkish commander employed to good advantage, utilising the river frontage so that a minimum of men could be used on an extensive front. Further still stood the main defences of Baghdad, placed astride an extraordinary loop of the river on the site of the ancient Greek and Persian twin cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, where in classic days the fate of many an empire was decided.

The aerial mapping of these positions, rendered necessary by inefficient photographic apparatus and inadequate maps made years before from river surveys, was a laborious task, that with reconnaissance work and bomb raids, kept our two Maurice Farmans and one Martinsyde scout well occupied, and provided plenty of excitement.

The Tigris has so many shifting reaches and sandbanks and is so apt to alter its course during floods on the stoneless country through which it flows, that it is known as the Dijla (liar) to the Arabs. We had consequently to improvise a method of correcting the maps without a compass, as local attraction within the aeroplane caused the compass to err. After much experiment we found that a large tee square fitted with pegs and held to the forehead was a most useful instrument for taking bearings.



RUINS OF THE PALACE OF CHOSROES AT CTESIPHON.







It was in this way—by taking bearings to some object with the square when over a known point, and by back bearings fixing its position by triangulation, and drawing it in on a map held on the knees,—that the enemy positions were mapped with the necessary accuracy to eventually enable night marches for the battle to be carried out on compass bearings.

It was on one of these excursions that my observer and I had an experience that is perhaps worth relating if only as a taxi-ing record.

We were labouring up and down at 5000 feet over the position at Ctesiphon one early autumn morning, the Turkish guns below us ringing their usual halo of white shrapnel bursts around us. Yeats-Brown was photographing the familiar and fascinating scene. . . . The enormous façade of the palace of Chosroes, monument to the decayed glory of the Persians, stood in clear relief beneath us like a giant airship hangar; the ubiquitous Tigris, bristling with scars of ancient irrigation cuts, wound snakelike into infinity; loops and serrated lines along the brown weals of ancient canals around Ctesiphon and on the Seleucian bank denoted redoubts and trenches that would take a costly toll of British blood to capture. . . . And having finished for the day, we were about to return home to breakfast and safety, when suddenly the engine began to miss badly.

Commencing a glide to the flank of the position, I passed a chit to Y.-B., explaining why, with some purple phrases concerning engines in general. Then with full throttle and diving steeply for a few hundred feet, on the off chance of the fault remedying itself, much to our relief it picked up its revolutions again, and I was able to pass him a "Praise-be-to-Allah" bulletin. But our joy was short-lived, for the engine recommenced to splutter and drop revolutions, forcing us to glide again. By making the most of a following wind, and by straightening out to level flight during the engine's lucid moments and gliding once more when it failed, I managed to leave Ctesiphon behind and clear the flank redoubt and outpost of the enemy position at Zeur.

There was considerable movement and confusion among the Turks and their horses and camels when we came to earth, but having landed with the wind on fairly level ground, and as the engine was still running feebly, I decided not to attempt repairs so close to the enemy, but to taxi till the engine stopped. The

wind having given us a good start, Y.-B. stood up in the observer's seat armed with a rifle, on the alert for pursuers, and to keep a look-out for bad ground.

As we drew away from the line of redoubts at Zeur, he declared that the cloud of dust behind us was caused by pursuing cavalry.

The ground over which we taxied was broken by old canals and rough patches of cracked earth where swamps had dried up in the tropical heat, and in places camel thorn grew thickly. By careful ruddering around the worst patches, and with occasional spurts of speed from the erratically running engine, the aeroplane rolled and bumped along at a rate that would not have disgraced many a motor car.

As we drew near the flank of the next position at Kutanieh, which rested on a long ridge of sandhills, I could see that I must find a road through or invite attention by stopping and endeavouring to remedy the fault in order to fly over the ridge.

Kutanieh was occupied by a force of about two thousand cavalry and camelry, with some guns that kept aeroplanes from lingering too long in observation. Into this camp I had made it my habit to drop what bombs I had left when returning each morning from Ctesiphon. Each morning too, our mounted patrols had exchanged a few shots with them, and that very day we had seen them scattered about the hills with patrols moving out and horses being led to water.

Finding a narrow road that disappeared into the ridge, I decided to follow it through as the easiest and quickest way out. Opening the throttle to the full and hoping that the road was not closed by barbed wire or broken by a trench, or that any of the enemy were already waiting for us, we scurried along at our best pace and were soon safely on the other side, the Turks having evidently been too slow to seize the opportunity to send out a party to cut us off.

As the next camp was home, we rather hoped for the excitement of pursuit, but strangely enough the peevish engine, as if tired of its jest, commenced to behave, and the fault—evidently a choke in the petrol pipe or some simple carburetter trouble—righted itself, possibly with the help of the rough jolting, and we were able to leave the ground again and fly over the dust of Aziziyeh, much to the surprise of the look-out man in our

observation tower, who through a telescope had seen us descend and had given us up for lost.

As Y.-B.'s Indian servant and Abbas with a clean face and rival enthusiasm regaled us with the best that stood for breakfast, we found that the fifteen mile joy ride along the enemy's road had not reduced our appetites, and we looked forward to a speedy traversing of the same road right through to Baghdad in the very near future.

## CHAPTER V

### CHANCE

**A**MONGST the miscellany of events which make up an airman's active service existence, there is a leavening of good fortune, which balances if it does not out-weigh the ill-fortune.

"A happy ending" on those occasions when chance plays a greater part than the human element can only be attributed to stupendous luck or the will of a benign providence. . . .

During my last month's flying I was very fortunate, for I had no less than five engine failures and on each occasion I was lucky enough to regain our lines.

It was a feature peculiar to the Mesopotamian front at that time, that one was only safe, except for Arab snipers, within the precincts of one's own camp. The conquered territory in the rear of the most advanced fighting troops right back to the base was practically a no-man's land roamed over by ruthless and merciless Arabs, while the towns on the line-of-communication were held by meagre garrisons—ill-spared from the fighting force,—in blockhouses and entrenched camps.

When a battle was pending, the marsh Arab and Bedouin tribes in the vicinity would foregather and camp on the flanks and in rear of the contending armies, so as to be conveniently placed to cut off small parties and stragglers, to snipe ships bringing reinforcements and supplies, and on the day of battle fall upon the beaten side, kill and loot the wounded, and anticipate the victors in the fruits of victory. True sons of Ishmael, "their hand against every man", these treacherous marauders hovered round the camps like jackals and spared neither Britisher, Indian nor hapless Turk who fell into their hands. . . . Assisted by the antiquity of our aeroplanes and the strong winds, against which our archaic planes could only make headway at a low altitude, the Arabs amply compensated for

any thrills that may have been lacking through the absence of enemy aircraft.

When accompanied by two other machines, when on a bomb raid of a large Arab camp, whose inhabitants had been continually sniping ships that brought our reinforcements, my engine failed. Having bombed to our satisfaction, the other planes were returning home while I was coming round on another circuit to try and drop a bomb which would not shake off owing to a twisted wire in the bomb carrier. Try as I would I could not release it and gliding down out of a vagrant cloud, my engine stopped. Gliding to the left bank of the Tigris, so as to put the river between us, I soon saw that every available landing place was an Arab camping ground. Turning to the west, I espied a small cluster of tents which fortunately enough were within gliding distance and which proved to be a fortified British post that good fortune and our General had placed six miles from camp. Holding my breath lest the bomb should fall off as I hit the earth, I landed on a small piece of cleared ground in front of their trenches, and by a vigorous flapping of the ailerons after landing and running through some heaps of earth, pulled up two or three yards from their wire. There I was able to effect repairs, and, with grinning long-legged sepoys holding the machine back so as to get off with a short run, I reached Aziziyeh just as another aeroplane was being sent out to see how the Arabs had shown their appreciation of our visit.

On another occasion Kut-el-Amarah wirelessly us that one of the naval seaplanes, carrying the Chief of the General Staff with important despatches from the Army Commander to our Divisional Commander, had left for our camp at Aziziyeh. As two hours had elapsed since its departure, and the sixty odd air miles should have been covered in a little over an hour, there was considerable anxiety regarding its non-arrival, and I was sent to look for it.

Assisted by the wind, I was soon speeding south, the fifty miles per hour of the old Farman being supplemented by a thirty-mile breeze behind it. . . . The winding Tigris, like a silver ribbon, unrolled beneath us, and approximately following its course I turned aside to either hand to examine anything suspicious as I was unaware whether I was searching for a land or sea machine.

The ground plan of brown desert, cleft from horizon to horizon by the eternal Tigris and blocked into irregular patterns by ancient canals and occasional patches of green, could have changed but little since Nebuchadnezzar's day. I fancy too, that had that worthy been taken for a joy ride, he would have declared that it looked no greener than when he grazed over it some two thousand years before, so thoroughly has the Turk neglected it.

From wandering groups of horsemen and Arab camps, puffs of white smoke showed that the Arabs were indulging their usual propensity and wasting some of their antiquated cartridges in pot-shots. Near the straggling town of Baghaliyeh an unusual dark object in the river attracted my attention. Gliding down to examine it I saw that it was the missing machine which, being grey and without markings, I had almost passed unnoticed.

It was close to the high right bank of the river and evidently aground on a spit of sand. A hundred yards or so from the river's edge was a large Arab encampment and I feared that I might already be too late. Descending to two hundred feet I circled above the camp and the plane to investigate, much to my relief seeing one of the crew waving to me from the sandbank.

The difficulty was to find a landing place. There was plenty of level ground on the left side but on the right bank much of the ground had been ploughed or cut up by canals, with the exception of a small stretch close beside the Arab camp. A party of horsemen who had been watching me with interest commenced to shoot and I found afterwards that one of the slugs from their large bore rifles had made a hole in my propeller, splitting it to the tip, while another broke a rib of an aileron. Considering the stretch of ground near the Arab tents too unsafe to land upon, I selected the only available place, a narrow track leading through some sand-hills about a thousand yards from the river. When I approached it after my first circuit, some Arabs with donkeys were standing on its only level patch. But as they did not seem to be carrying rifles, and I thought they would be as afraid of the aeroplane as I was of them, I decided to land there. "Pancaking" on to the track, which measured about fifteen by thirty yards, I landed as carefully as possible, the aeroplane, owing to the

strong wind, stopping almost dead. Fortunately, the donkey party fled.

Keeping the engine running slowly, I pulled the tail of the machine round to a slightly more convenient position in case I should have to leave hurriedly. As the eight or nine horsemen who had fired at me were extending and riding out to a position that left me between them and the Arab camp, I decided that a little bluff was necessary. . . . I imagined that no Arab could conceive that a propeller could go on revolving with nobody to twirl it, so I acted a pantomime of walking away from the machine, pointing to the Arabs as if giving directions to somebody in the cockpit to keep an eye on them, and gazed at them through looped fingers as if regarding them through field glasses. Noticing an Arab creeping along a canal towards me, I pointed him out to the whole world. I was hoping that the crew of the seaplane might be able to reach me during this interval, when I would have attempted to carry them back with me, though as all early flying men know, the Maurice Farman aeroplane with seventy horse Renault engine was not the best multi-passenger carrying bus.

After waiting some minutes, and being uncertain whether the stranded ones could see me, and as I dared not wave a handkerchief to attract attention lest the Arabs might mistake it for a token of surrender, I decide to set out for the river to help them. I should have liked to have kept the engine running so that the swishing propeller might keep the Arabs in awe a little longer, but I could not spare the precious petrol—and had reluctantly to switch it off.

There seemed to be a good deal of commotion round the black tents of the Arab camp and as I approached them with two rifles ostentatiously displayed, and a horseman galloped out from behind a tent towards me. Hoping this was merely meant to impress me and force me to run, upon which the others would no doubt attack, I marched straight on. He approached to within about twenty yards and as I continued on my way he reined in and rode back to camp.

As the river had no bordering palms and was sunk well below the level of the plain I could not see it after landing. I knew, however, that it lay beyond the three largest tents of the Arab camp. Avoiding mounds where Arabs might be lurking, I resolved to continue the so far successful bluff and go between



the tents to the river. With rifles at the slope, I approached the camp where the tents were about fifty yards apart. Faces of men, women and children peered out at me and I fully expected that shooting would recommence. But evidently still uncertain of the potentiality of the machine that had descended from the heavens among them, they even held back the yelping mongrel dogs that are part of the complement of every Arab camp. Just at this time too,—and this without doubt further impressed them, and certainly heartened me, a converted seaplane appeared overhead from Kut-el-Amarah. Instead of landing though, they glided to about two thousand feet and returned towards Kut, wirelessly, I afterwards learnt, the position of the stranded party. Puzzled by their action, I continued towards the river and eventually approached two figures silhouetted in the distance whom I believed to be the crew of the stranded machine. To my surprise they were two sullen looking Arabs, who were leaning on their rifles keenly watching my movements.

Changing direction slightly I reached Major Gordon, the pilot of the seaplane, awaiting my arrival at the river's edge. We joined the General, who was delighted to gain possession of a rifle, and together we started back to the Farman.

Their seaplane had lost revolutions some distance down stream, and the pilot had been forced to land on the river. After taxi-ing some miles on the water the engine completely stopped and the wind blew the machine ashore on a sandbank immediately in front of the Arab camp. Fortunately the river banks were high at that point and as the Arabs had not seen them land they were unobserved for some time, and even after their discovery the Arabs, though hostile, seemed to stand in awe of this strange river craft and had hesitated to attack.

While returning circuitously to the aeroplane, I was cogitating deeply how my ancient bus, if still intact, would take-off the small piece of ground on which I had landed with the additional weight of two passengers, when we saw a party of men marching towards the aeroplane from the south. Their formation was too orderly for Arabs, and after much eye-strain we identified them as a British force of some description. On approaching nearer we found them picqueted around the plane, which the manœuvring horsemen had still hesitated to attack, no doubt fearing the phantom that had twirled the propeller.

The troops were a party of twenty Mahratta sepoy, forming portion of an escort to a convoy of *mahalas*, whose clustered masts I had seen in the distance just before landing. Knowing nothing of the seaplane, they had seen me come to earth and fancying that I had met with some mishap their enterprising British Subaltern had marched them to my assistance.

Major Gordon remained with the escort, who also guarded the seaplane. The General climbed aboard; Gordon swung the propeller, while the sepoy with shining eyes and expansive grins held the machine back as I opened the throttle wide, and after a short and zig-zaggy "take-off" round sandheaps and other obstructions, headed for Aziziyeh, reaching camp at dusk with the petrol at the last drop.

## CHAPTER VI

### MISCHANCE

**G**OOD fortune had favoured me during six months' flying in Mesopotamia when, in November '15, it was my *kismet* to be consigned to as strange a behind-the-scenes oblivion as was possible in war's drama.

During the past month Lieut. Fulton and I had daily reconnoitred the Ctesiphon and intervening positions on two to three-hour flights that taxed the powers of our labouring Farmans. We were glad therefore, when Captain Petre rejoined us from hospital after head injuries that he had received in a crash soon after Kut-el-Amarah. Fulton was then able to join Major Reilly in more distant reconnaissances on one of the two newly arrived Martinsyde scouts.

Flying the sluggish Farman from point to point over the enemy defences on a gusty day, mapping the position with the garden rake device held to the forehead and supporting a mapboard on the knees on which bearings and calculations were written, while guns 4000 feet below dotted the atmosphere with shrapnel bursts, was an experience that kept mind and body alert and quickly dissipated any early morning lethargy.

The maps finished, there were rumours of special stunts being required of the R.F.C. All infantry drafts at Basra had been brought up to Aziziyeh; line-of-communication and clerical staffs were reduced to a minimum, and all available men were given rifles, as our little force of eight thousand fighting men was to move on Baghdad.

A bomb attack from a low altitude on the boat bridge that linked Ctesiphon and Seleucia was mooted, and the destruction of the railway that ran north from Baghdad to Samara was also suggested as a task for the Flying Corps.

The Naval Flight, which had been stationed for some time in Kut-el-Amarah, now joined us, apparently eager to assist.

When the guesswork had subsided, it was found that the only unusual stunt required was to isolate Baghdad by destroying the telegraph lines that run north and west from that city.

Of the two lines, the westerly one was the more important, and as Arab spies were considered too untrustworthy for the task it had to be done by aeroplane, if only by virtue of the great distance to be travelled into enemy territory.

Rightly enough, Reilly, as O.C. of our force, did not want the responsibility of detailing anyone for this task, so it was left to volunteers.

As neither my observer, Captain Yeats-Brown, nor I had any reasonable excuse for not wanting to go, as our engine had recently been running quite well, and as we were both single men, we volunteered for the task, though we undeniably saw the possibility of two perfectly healthy officers and one antiquated aeroplane "going west"—for landing behind the enemy's lines for demolition work could hardly be called a before-breakfast constitutional, nor was it fashionable even during the latter stages of the war, when aeroplanes were faster and carried machine guns.

There were believed to be six lines of wire on the telegraph posts, so the bright suggestion of a visitor to our mess, whose own engine unfortunately prevented him volunteering—that we fly into the wires to break them, was not hailed with the enthusiasm that he had expected; nor was that of a similarly circumstanced visiting airman, who suggested that we should drag a grapnel behind us. . . . A time bomb might have solved the difficulty,—if we had been able to obtain one.

It was necessary to fly sixty odd miles to the point where the wires were to be destroyed. And as the aeroplane was capable only of three hours' flight at fifty miles per hour before refilling, the very likely possibility of encountering a head wind necessitated our carrying extra tins of petrol and oil to fill the tanks before returning.

Late on the eve of the event, I stripped the plane of its bomb carrier and all superfluous weight, satisfied myself with the engine, and scribbled a brief message home. Y.B., meanwhile, at the dugout of some sapper friends who declared telegraph wires too tough to cut, prepared some necklaces of guncotton, which the engineers recommended as sure uprooters of telegraph posts.

Being Friday 18th seemed a trifle ominous, though we did not allow that popular superstition to trouble us. In the half light before dawn the plane was wheeled on to the aerodrome by Tigris side. Jimmy the mechanic swung the propeller and as the engine ticked away in steady rhythm while warming up, with Abbas standing by like a rueful little Santa Claus, hung with field glasses, maps and coats, we checked over the "goods". A revolver each, a rifle, the charges, fuses and matches, the tins of petrol and oil in the cockpit, and our maps and binoculars.

Satisfied at length that we had forgotten nothing and that the engine was in its best mood, we adjusted goggles and mufflers, opened the throttle wide till the engine roared out its full, and with a valedictory wave to the mechanics and my ragamuffin servant, we sped across the aerodrome, as the "hunter of the East" was showing a few faint streaks above the horizon's edge. Heavily laden and rising slowly, with the cool exhilarating air in our faces, we soon left the sleeping camp behind.

Far down the Tigris we could see a broad-decked paddle steamer approaching our camp from the south, the first ship to reach Aziziyeh for over a week owing to the plundering of a convoy by the enemy. We thought of the home mail that would be waiting for us on our return . . . perhaps.

Without waiting to gain altitude we flew straight on our course so as to be as economical as possible with petrol. Crossing to the right bank of the Tigris, so that no advanced enemy posts might see us and telegraph to the main positions in rear, we passed over the blackened and abandoned ruins of the mud village of Baghdadiéh, which had been demolished two days previously by the guns of our newly-arrived monitor.

Among the cool gardens and date groves of Jumaicia we saw a battalion of the enemy in bivouac close to the town and regretted that we had no bombs to sound their reveille. Making mental notes of their position we promised them further attention on our way back.

We left the strongly fortified position of Seleucia on our right hand. Rows of redoubts and zigzagged trenches scarred the mounds of the one-time famous Greek republic, relic of Alexander's day, whose memory is immortalised by its struggles with the Parthians. A week before our last flight we had caught

the Turkish gunners napping there, by circling down whilst under fire from Ctesiphon, and had thoroughly reconnoitred the position from a thousand feet. One of their armed transports was steaming up stream and from five hundred feet we had pelted it with half a dozen bombs while it zigzagged about, its crew running races up and down the deck, while a band of Arabs kept up a smoky rifle fire from the banks. Though we did not sink it, we wisely enough reserved two bombs for a better billet among some disembarking cavalry further downstream.

Not wishing to advertise our presence to Seleucia on this all-important day, we flew round its outer flank. On a road that ran close to the position we could see a number of vehicles drawn by white horses, looking strangely like china toys upon a child's map, the drivers halting to stare and shoot. Wide scattered on the flank were numerous Arab camps and mud villages, some of which blended so harmoniously with the scrub covered desert that they were hardly discernible. Scores of white puffs betrayed them, for an Arab can no more resist shooting at a low-flying aeroplane than the ordinary sportsman would miss a shot at a hare.

Bearing in towards the Tigris again, so as to land as close as possible to Baghdad, the city suddenly loomed through the mists in the east. Baghdad was the Mecca of our little army, as was Constantinople to the troops who were fighting at that time among the hills and valleys of Gallipoli. So far, we of the Flying Corps had been the only ones privileged to see our goal, which always, after the barrenness of our desert camp at Aziziyeh, appeared like some wonderful city of enchantment. Seen from the air on this early November morn, with the sun gleaming on the gold cupolas and minarets of the mosques of Khazimain, with date plantations fringing the silver waters of the Tigris into hazy infinity, the historic city of the Caliphs appeared indescribably beautiful and fantastic as a dream city.

There was little time for admiration of the scene, for a few minutes later, on a brown road that ran eastwards to the city, we saw the wires that we had come so far to destroy.

Unfortunately the road was the chief thoroughfare to Baghdad from the west and troops of all arms were marching along it towards the city. The region over which we were flying had not been previously reconnoitred and our maps had

shown the wires running at some distance from the road, instead of which we found they kept closely to it, making our task considerably more difficult.

A tolerably level stretch of ground about four miles from the city tempted me and I had already commenced to descend when a large body of cavalry appeared. We decided therefore to follow the road away from Baghdad till we could find a safer landing place.

Infantry, cavalry, transport, small straggling parties, and an enormous column of camels that scattered at our approach, passed in a colourless procession beneath us. We considered the advisability of returning in case Intelligence was unaware of this apparent reinforcement, but we were confident that we could first carry out our task, and in any case we were obliged to land somewhere to refill the tanks for the return journey.

Seeing a bare patch of ground about eight miles from the city, that was crossed by the telegraph wires at a point about two hundred yards from the road, we decided to land there. It was a rectangular plot of once-cultivated land bounded on two sides by canals and on the other two sides by the road and bad ground.

We supposed the few scattered individuals in the vicinity to be shepherds or roaming Arabs. About a quarter of a mile distant on the other side of the road there was a large building that looked like a deserted caravanserai. From previous experience we thought it likely that the Arabs would not attack us at once and that in any case we might be able to keep them off till we had completed our task. Rapidity of action was essential, so throttling down the engine I commenced a spiral descent on to the brown square beneath.

There was no wind when we left Aziziyeh and there still appeared to be none. It was not possible to land parallel to the wires on account of the narrowness of the ground, so I decided to land towards them, spiralling right to the earth to save time instead of flying around at a low altitude.

We had completed the last circle close to the ground and, facing the telegraph wires, were passing over the road at about thirty feet, when looking down I saw directly beneath a brightly uniformed Turkish horseman calmly gazing up at us!

His presence was disconcerting to say the least, as it indicated the probability of others. Y.-B. was seated behind

me arranging his guncotton charges, so stretching out a hand I jerked at his leg and pointed the man out.

We landed lightly almost at the same instant, to find Fate unpropitious from the moment our wheels touched the earth . . . A ground breeze, blowing in the contrary direction to the prevailing *shamal*, had sprung up during the flight, and, blowing behind us, swept us along the smooth dried mud towards the wires. Had there been plenty of room, this would not have mattered in the slightest; but travelling at speed in a confined space made a turn very difficult, especially as I had cut my landing so fine in the endeavour to land as close as possible to the wires. I saw that I must take the alternative of either running into the wires with the certainty that my front elevator would be knocked off, or risk a capsize and crash into the canal by a quick turn. . . . I decided to do the latter. But as all airmen know, a turn on the ground with a following wind takes more room than when running against it. And though I used aileron and rudder I saw to my dismay the lower left plane strike one of the telegraph posts, smashing longeron and ribs to matchwood. Switching off the engine I jumped down to make an examination while Y.-B. ran off with a guncotton necklace to the nearest telegraph post.

Some Arabs about three hundred yards away immediately opened fire, making quite good shooting, for the bullets kicked up the dust close by. Then the ground seemed literally to spawn Arabs. On both sides of us and on the road we could see them running towards us and hear them calling to each other, while the cavalryman, after a short consultation, set off at full gallop down the road.

A hasty inspection revealed that besides the broken longeron and ribs, the two outer struts which separate the planes were hanging in the air, and as the surrounding country was too rough to taxi over I knew that unless I could keep the Arabs at bay and affect some sort of temporary repairs, such as wiring the struts down to the chassis, the aeroplane would be unable to leave the ground.

The Arabs seemed to be in no fear of us and were advancing and shooting from all directions and to check them I knelt in the observer's seat and took careful aim at the foremost of them. He jumped and dropped beside the canal, though I do not think he was hit. Others had gained the canals, where,



with the mounds as parapets, they could reply to my fire in safety.

After a few more shots I commenced to fill the tanks, crawling out to a conspicuous seat near the engine, while bullets zipped past uncomfortably close, kicked up dust beneath, or whizzed through the machine.

Y.-B. had lit his fuse by this time and returned to the plane as I was perched on the tanks wrestling with the cap of a can of oil. Suddenly his charge of explosives crashed out, bringing a telegraph pole to the ground in a cloud of dust and momentarily checking the advance of the Arabs.

I had not yet told my companion that the machine was unflyable, though I foresaw that we could do little else than put up a fight to a finish and endeavour to kill as many as possible before being killed ourselves. As he set out for the fallen pole with another necklace with which to sever the wires, I commenced shooting again so that he could accomplish this.

At this moment a party of Turks, with two or three horsemen among the number, appeared on our right and opened fire from the canal that faced the Arabs. We had thus a crossfire from canals on either side of us at no greater range than two hundred yards. This distance was steadily reduced as they crawled behind the banks towards us.

Getting out of the machine, I decided to try my aim from a prone position on the ground, where I could get a rest for the rifle. But finding I could not see them I climbed back into the machine and replied as well as I could from a kneeling position in the observer's seat.

The canal banks gave them excellent protection and a covered line of approach, so that I seldom had a good target and was thus unable to check them, even had one rifle been of use against so many. As we were wearing large topees, I can only attribute it to excitement and consequent wild shooting on the part of the Arabs and Turks that we were not hit, for neither of us at any time took cover from their fire.

Y.-B. having lighted the second fuse ran back to the plane, when I told him the state of affairs. We decided to taxi away as far as possible in hopes of putting up another stand; but as soon as I ceased firing in order to work the switch while Y.-B. swung the propeller, our enemies were able to take uninterrupted aim and increased their fire, while some of them climbed

over the parapet and rushed towards us. The engine "bit" on the first swing, much to our joy, and I held it throttled down while my comrade climbed in. At this moment the burning fuse reached the second charge and telegraph insulators were shot in all directions by the explosion, but the shattering of the wires caused them to whip back and entangle the aeroplane in their coils!

Only then did I realise our utter helplessness, with an unflyable plane, sixty miles from camp in enemy territory and on a piece of ground so circumscribed that we could not taxi away.

We had been told in case of accident we were not to burn the aeroplane, as the fall of Baghdad was imminent and the machine would probably be recaptured. So seeing the Arabs and Turks racing up to us, I left the engine running in order that it might incapacitate itself, and stepped down to surrender.

In a moment we were surrounded, though Y.-B., before he realised the hopelessness of it all, made a frantic effort to get away and actually succeeded in freeing our machine of the wires by opening the engine throttle.

The first man to approach me was a hideous black Arab with shaggy hair, who was stark naked but for two broad bandoliers of cartridges across his chest. He covered me from about ten yards with a large bore rifle that would have slain an elephant, and hardly expecting to be taken prisoner, I put my hand in my jacket for my revolver to shoot him. The twirling propeller fortunately attracted his attention at this moment and he left me to loot the aeroplane. His ferocious looking companions, yelling "Ingrazzi" (English) and showing their teeth in the most repulsive manner, rushed at me with clubbed rifles.

I endeavoured to evade their blows by warding them off with my arms and by ducking and dodging, but one blow caught me on the top of the head, smashing my topee down over my ears. The battered topee was soon knocked off, whereupon somebody struck me a blow with the empty petrol can that I had thrown away a few minutes before. Next I received a stunning blow on the top of the head with some instrument which I believe was an adze, for I had seen several of them among the party. This made a cut about three inches long which bled profusely over my face and clothes. The adze must have been very blunt as it raised an enormous lump on my head as well.

Thankful that my skull was so hard and that I had not gone down with the blow, I wrested myself free from the group, to be seized by another party that included two Turks.

The Arabs were utter savages in different stages of nudity and variously armed, while the Turks, who were uniformed and well equipped, appeared to be a smart detachment of gendarmerie. Although in the minority, the Turks seemed desirous of taking us prisoners, and assuredly without them we should have received small mercy from the Arabs.

Meanwhile, Yeats-Brown was the centre of another group which fortunately was mainly Turkish, but among the Arabs that brandished rifles and bitumen-knobbed clubs around him, I saw one strike him between the shoulders with a hammer.

Particular attention was meted out to me, no doubt on account of my shooting and as probably they took me for a soldier owing to my rubber-necked flying coat covering the stars on my shoulder straps. One of the Arabs endeavoured to cut off my coat by chopping me across the back with a rusty sword, but the heirloom with which he was armed was fortunately so blunt that I felt its weight more than its edge.

Although apparently half-afraid of the Arabs, the Turks were attempting to lead or rather drag us towards the dilapidated building that we had seen before landing. The Arabs did their best to hinder them and some fierce discussions ensued. Several times they succeeded in getting us away from the Turks and we were repeatedly struck and spat upon. Y.-B. had his shoulder-straps torn off and we were relieved of most of the things in our pockets. As their numbers increased, each new arrival would put his rifle to our heads and was only dissuaded from blowing out our brains after much persuasion by the Turks.

Reluctantly they would content themselves with firing over our heads and striking at and spitting on us. One bull-necked ruffian offered his horse's bridle to Yeats-Brown as if he would give him a lift, but when my comrade went to take the bridle the Arab stabbed at him with an ugly dagger that he had concealed.

The most horrible and discordant din, interspersed with rifle and pistol shots, was kept up as they danced and gesticulated around us.

Hours seemed to have elapsed since we landed, though it

must have been a matter of only a few minutes. Hopelessly depressed by the march of calamitous events, we were led into the ancient building, which by the irony of fate proved to be the gendarmes' headquarters. And as the heavy doors were slammed on the howling throng we realised we were no longer free men.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CITY OF THE CALIPHS

**W**E found ourselves in a rough vaulted building in the centre of which the horses of the garrison were stabled. Its thick loopholed walls seemed to be of great age. An elderly N.C.O. of the gendarmes, who had been instrumental in saving us from the Arabs, brought us pomegranates and flaps of coarse bread from a brightly tasselled saddle bag that hung on the wall. Spreading them out before us beside a jar of water, he invited us to eat and drink. Although we had had no food that day we felt too depressed to eat, and only learnt later from experience never to refuse food.

A Turkish Colonel or Kaimakam, who was Governor of the district in which we had landed, asked us our names, writing them down with a sharpened reed and drying the thick ink with sand. He spoke a little French and asked us if we had lost any valuables to the Arabs. After jotting down a list and instituting a search among the Arabs who had been allowed to enter the building, he salved my cigarette case from one of his staff. He was efficient and courteous and in his smart greenish-khaki uniform, woolly fez and black leggings, looked somewhat incongruous among the blue and red of his rough-looking bandoliered men.

We would be taken straightway to Baghdad he informed us. Meanwhile the Arabs outside were beating upon the doors, occasional shots were fired, and the loud expostulations of the gendarmes appeared to be unheeded. The din grew louder as their numbers increased. No doubt the Kaimakam feared that the Arabs would force the doors and overpower his men. He fancied that my head needed urgent medical attention, though I assured him that it was not as bad as it looked.

When the doors were swung open and we were led out, mounted gendarmes cleared an avenue through the yelling

crowd to a hooded four-wheeler conveyance that had been commandeered for us.

With a mounted escort of eight men and the Kaimakam on the box beside the driver we started on our way to Baghdad, after a final demonstration by the Arabs as they realised that we were not to be handed over to them. The Turks, as well as ourselves, seemed glad to see the last of them, for in that vicinity, and in fact almost generally in Mesopotamia at that time, the Arabs recognised no authority but their own sheikhs. When we had travelled about three miles, sitting uncomfortably on the floor of the arabah, in a very different humour to that in which we had flown over the same ground a short while before, an Arab galloped up and caused great excitement among the guard.

Our horses were whipped to a gallop, and looking back from the swaying vehicle under the flap of the hood we saw the reason. In the far distance Arab horsemen were strung out across the plain in hot pursuit. It was an exciting chase, though there could be only one result. Three abreast, the stocky little horses in the arabah, though they galloped magnificently, could not outdistance the bigger animals of the Arabs who pursued us.

They steadily gained upon us, firing as they galloped, or holding their rifles high in the air, until, overhauling us, they circled around till the carriage was brought to a standstill.

As we watched the chase and hold-up and thought of the sudden turn events had taken during the past hour, it seemed like some vivid Wild West product of the cinema, though I had only to put my hand to my head to feel reality in the egg-shaped bump that had formed there and to realise that we were more than interested spectators.

Most of the Arabs were splendidly mounted and rode bareback. Their sheikh, a stout villainous-looking ruffian who rode superbly and eyed us as an animal its prey, beckoned to the Kaimakam to descend from the arabah. As he left us the Turk asked if we would fight against the Arabs, which we readily agreed to do, for we did not relish the possibility of falling into their hands again.

After a long parley with the Kaimakam and much ostentation on the part of our guard, some of whom indulged in mock combat with the Arabs, we were allowed to proceed. Several

Arabs joined forces with our guard and when we moved on again vied with them in caracoling, racing and pirouetting around, giving us an attractive display of horsemanship which we were scarcely in the mood to appreciate.

We learned afterwards that the sheikh in whose territory we had landed had contended that we were his prisoners, and hearing that we were being taken to Baghdad, set out in pursuit. During the long discussion with the Kaimakam he had demanded that we be handed over to him in order that he might take our heads to the Turkish commander at Ctesiphon for a reward.

Whether the Kaimakam promised that he would deliver the heads or pay the reward we were not able to ascertain, but accompanied by about twenty of the sheikh's cut-throats in addition to our guard we continued on our way.

Some of these uncouth warriors galloped ahead as a vanguard to spread the glad tidings of our capture in Baghdad and as we approached the city a stream of people came out to meet us.

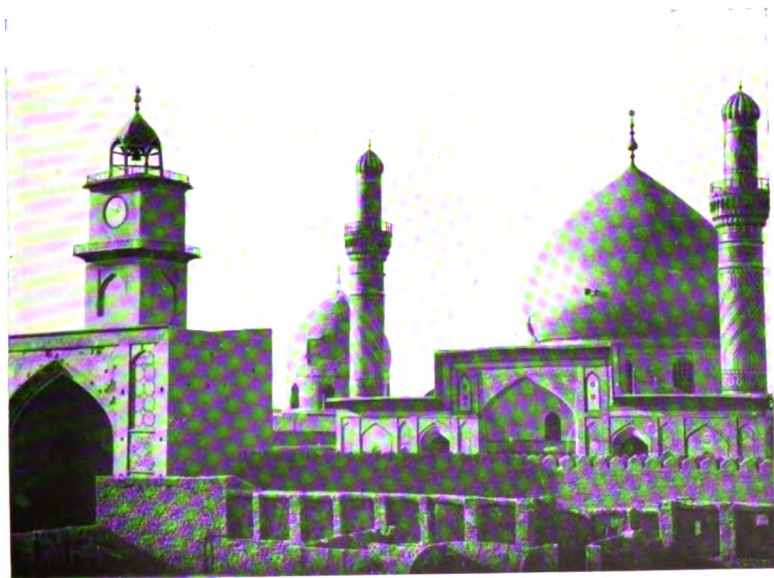
The narrow streets of the Arab quarter through which we were driven were choked with an excited Arab mob, who greeted us with jeers, struck at us with sticks and spat in our faces. The flap was torn from the hood of the vehicle. Several of the fanatics hung on the carriage in an endeavour to stop it, while two of their number, one of whom carried a long knife, managed to clamber into the back of the arabah. But for our guard, of whom the old N.C.O. was most conspicuous, and some soldiers on duty in the bazaar, who used their fists and rifle butts with good effect, we should have been at the mercy of the crowd. On reaching the bazaar the din was deafening and there seemed small hope of being able to drive through the crooked, crowded streets. The shouting mob surged and fought around us, shopkeepers left their stalls and every recess and doorway was packed with black-robed Arab women who clawed the air and kept up a high pitched screaming wail seeming to urge the men to attack us.

We endured the indignity and ignominy of it all as stolidly as we could, although it was particularly galling not to be able to strike the repulsive faces of the rabble that peered in to spit and jeer.

It was quite natural that some such demonstration should



A GUFAH ON THE TIGRIS AT BAGHDAD.



BAGHDAD: THE MOSQUES OF KHAZIMAIN.





take place, for the British force was practically knocking at the gates of Baghdad; excitement ran high, and the mob seized this opportunity of venting their spleen on an enemy that could not retaliate.

Eventually, after suffering the execrations of the riff-raff, and being spat upon by merchant and mendicant, we emerged from the bazaar and drew up at a large barracks.

Our entry into the flagged courtyard on foot was the signal for loud cheering from rows of fezged youths who lined a balcony overlooking the courtyard.

Hatless, dishevelled and dirty, we felt the humiliation of the situation to the full as we were led across the quadrangle, through a small curtained doorway, to a much mirrored room, tawdrily decorated in faded red and gold.

A short, bearded Turk who sat on a divan in the centre of the room rose and greeted us in broken English. He was the local war correspondent he informed us and forthwith began to interrogate us regarding the British force. We were in no mood to be questioned and took pains to give him small satisfaction, whereupon we were quickly marched out again to be gazed upon by various gorgeously uniformed and heavily moustached personages who lacked none of the self-importance usually associated with petty government officials.

The square was then lined with a double row of soldiers with fixed bayonets. Resignedly we simultaneously remarked that no doubt the next ceremony would be our execution.

Led from point to point amid salvos of cheering and a frantic waving of crescented flags from the military cadets on the balconies, we were at length marched along a guarded thoroughfare to the river's edge.

The famous bridge of boats at Baghdad had been moved down stream to connect the Ctesiphon and Seleucia positions, so we were ferried across the Tigris in a small boat, followed by the shouts of the disappointed mob, who realised that after all we were neither to be shot nor drowned.

In a large building that flew the Red Crescent, denoting a hospital, we were taken before a bevy of red-fezged doctors, who, after an examination of my battered head, had it shaved as smooth as an egg by a barber who might have been a reincarnation of the father of Hadji Baba. Swathing the result in some yards of bandage that was finished off around my neck

we were put in a small whitewashed room furnished with two beds, where we were left with a sentry and our own gloomy thoughts for company.

Tired of conjuring up the might-have-beens, utterly depressed by our bad luck, and fatigued by the excitement of the last two hours, we slept for some time, only to be awakened to the disappointing reality of captivity by the entrance of a Jewish youth bringing us food. A table was brought in and set for several persons. Shortly afterwards, Hakki Bey, a tall stern-looking Colonel of gendarmerie and Commandant of Baghdad, entered with two or three doctors and a young Turkish Flying officer. Producing a bottle of whisky, which he placed on the table with much ostentation, he informed us with great *empressement* that we would dine together.

We had heard of the traditional hospitality of the Turk, but we rightly suspected in this case it would serve a double purpose.

The whisky was pressed upon us as we ate, but we were as abstemious as any temperance advocate. Much to Hakki Bey's only partially concealed disgust we were also utter babes on the subject of war, either showing blissful ignorance of military matters or switching the conversation into other channels.

We were assisted by the loquacity of one of the doctors, who had imbibed not wisely, and who in exoneration of the recent wholesale massacring of Armenians by the Turks, entertained us with a fanatical denunciation of that unfortunate race. Neither did I contradict Fasel Bey, the Flying officer, but on the contrary pretended to give him great credit for the information that it was a faulty sparking plug that had brought us to earth.

Only the bibulous doctor was satisfied, the others being obviously disappointed by our reserve. They were puzzled as to our mission, not realising that we had landed in order to destroy the telephone wires, while they supposed the explosions were caused by bombs thrown by us in self-defence. So that they would not realise the damage done, for some days we refrained from cabling to our relatives that we were alive and prisoners.

With a shuffling of slippers feet that lasted throughout

the night, Arab porters brought large earthenware jars and placed them in long rows beneath our window. They were merely water vessels destined for the trenches at Ctesiphon, but ghost-like and weird in the light of the moon they reminded us vividly of the jars of Ali Baba or his resurrected prototype, Chu Chin Chow. But though our drama was also staged in this city of the Caliphs, our chances were small of utilising the vessels as a hiding place even had it been advisable.

After the constant activity of the past few months we felt the ennui of complete idleness more poignantly the next day than at any subsequent time. The sudden transition from the freedom of open spaces to the close restraint of a prison cell was irksome and exasperating in the extreme. One slight diversion was the rebandaging of my head by a heavy handed and morose old doctor, whose stock in trade consisted of a bottle of iodine.

In sheer desperation we endeavoured to wheedle some topographical information from the French-speaking Jewish youth who brought us food, for we had begun to think out a plan of escape.

Reasonably perhaps we supposed that if we could bolt the door of our cell when our sentry stood outside, we could have dropped from the unbarred window to the street below; for we were not desirous of being taken off with the Turks when the British force captured the city, an event we expected to occur during the next few days.

Such an attempt would have proved futile without the knowledge of a hiding place in Baghdad, as our uniforms made us so conspicuous. Moreover, we knew only a few words of Arabic.

On anything but the subject of food, Josef seemed too terrified to speak, which made us wonder if he supposed the ragged sentry also understood us when we inquired about the location of the Christian quarter, where we hoped to hide.

From the window we saw numbers of Arabs being marched to the water front for embarkation to the defences at Ctesiphon. These unwilling recruits were roped together in fours, and further secured against desertion by being fastened in pairs with pieces of wood nailed upon their wrists. From the shrieking and wailing of their women, who beat their breasts and kissed the sleeves of the sentries, one would have judged them to be en route for execution.

My observations from the window were viewed with disfavour by Hakki Bey, who, entering unexpectedly, dryly remarked that it was unsafe to look out of the window as I might fall on the bayonet of the sentry who stood beneath.

We were glad of the information, for though it was impossible to fall out over the three-foot sill, we had been unaware of a sentry standing in a recess in the wall immediately beneath us.

We were convinced that escape was hopeless for the present and that Hakki Bey had spoken truly, when late that night I passed the sentry while being escorted with much clanking of sword and spurs by a brightly uniformed staff officer into the presence of the Commandant.

In a tawdry and much crescented office, where a libellous oleograph of the Sultan garishly obtruded, I was confronted by Hakki and Raouf Bey, the Turkish war correspondent.

After interpreting a few polite platitudes from Hakki, Raouf Bey solemnly drew my attention to the Sultan's likeness, at which I could not repress a smile, for had it been a caricature it could scarcely have been more grotesque, though no doubt in Raouf's loyal eyes it symbolised all that was majestic and regal. No interrogation took place, which somewhat puzzled me. After smoking as many of Hakki's best cigarettes as I was able, I was marched back to hospital as suddenly as I had come,—to find Yeats-Brown had disappeared!

The absolute solitude of the succeeding day, during which I was deprived of the sole distraction of the window, seemed interminable. Consequently I was not in the best mood for interrogation when I was again taken before the Commandant that night.

Studied plausibility and threats of bad treatment apologetically interpreted by Raouf Bey only exasperated me the more, so that by prevarication, deliberate untruths and finally a direct refusal to answer questions I so incensed the martial Hakki that my solitary confinement was continued for a week.

I gathered one piece of information from his questioning. A dastardly attempt that had been made to murder the assistant political officer attached to our force had been prompted by the Turkish Commander or his satellites. This attempt had taken place a week before my capture, an artillery officer being stabbed while sleeping, by an Arab who had crept into our

camp to assassinate Lieut.-Col. Leachman,—the man whose influence with the Arab tribes the Turks so greatly feared.\*

The week's solitary confinement seemed unending. I felt at daggers drawn with the whole world, my only entertainment being to watch the verminous sentry clean his rifle, or with his companion devour the food that I left. I conjured up the happenings of the past few months and tried to picture our mess at Aziziyeh. Then efforts to recollect scraps of verse I had learnt at school, or the plots and characters of various books, helped the weary hours along; for I found complete idleness without companionship, book or pen, more brain-racking and nerve-testing than the most strenuous activities.

The kindly Raouf Bey provided the one bright interlude by bringing me two English copies of Scott's novels, and therefore for the last two days before Yeats-Brown returned I revelled in the pages of "The Betrothed" and "The Monastery".

Yeats-Brown had been confined in a room close by, as I gathered from seeing a sentry outside it. And though at meeting we were anxious to talk over every detail, we purposely refrained for some time in case we were overheard.

By occasional surreptitious glances through the window, we saw hundreds of wounded Turks, some crawling on hands and knees, others supported by less seriously wounded comrades, making their way painfully but uncomplainingly to the hospitals.

There was considerable noise and excitement in the city and from faint cannonading at night we supposed that our troops were nearing Baghdad. Our Turkish sentries were relieved by Arabs armed with obsolete weapons, and once more we were hopeful, so anxiously watched for any sign of confusion that would give us an opportunity to effect an escape. Our hopes were short-lived, for one morning we were awakened before dawn to be told that we were to leave at once for Mosul.

A warlike escort of half-a-dozen gendarmes bristling with weapons, waited at the door. By every imaginable device we endeavoured to delay our departure. Dressing as slowly as possible we spent much time looking for supposedly lost garments. Yeats-Brown prolonged his toilet with a superfluous

\* Lieut.-Col. Leachman, Royal Sussex Regiment, was ultimately treacherously murdered by an Arab five years later.

shave, while I wound and unwound yards of unnecessary bandage from my head, which had almost healed. I even trusted myself to the mercy of the hospital barber, though he had nearly flayed me alive on a previous occasion. Our factotum Josef was then despatched to the bazaar to purchase bread, dates and a jar of water, meanwhile our impatient escort removed everything from the room but ourselves.

For lack of further pretext we were obliged at last to leave and accompany the scowling guards into the street.

Sammi Bey, the good-natured Chief of the hospital, made us each a present of the quilt and mattress from our beds, and as we heard that he had personally borne the expense of the good food that had been supplied us, we left cheques for the Red Crescent Society, a kindred organisation to the Red Cross.

At the water-front, numbers of wounded, just unloaded from a river steamer, were endeavouring unaided to climb the steep river bank on their way to hospital. Stolid and uncomplaining they struggled along, stumbling with weakness and being obliged to rest every few yards. Enemies though they were, we could not but admire their fortitude. It is undoubtedly the fortitude and stoicism of the Turk who from birth is innured to hardship, which, combined with his innate bravery, makes him such a formidable adversary.

On the opposite bank, the quietness of which was in marked contrast to the day of our arrival, we found two arabahs waiting. The *aspirante* who commanded our guard placed three gendarmes in one vehicle and with a sentry, rifle on knees, facing us in the other, we commenced the journey to Mosul.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ON ASSYRIAN SOIL

**W**E were wending our way through the mounds that cover the ancient Baghdad of Haroun-el-Raschid, when we heard the report of guns and saw two shells burst over the city. Instantly we supposed they had been fired by the Horse Artillery of the British Cavalry Brigade, to demand the surrender of the city. In a fervent, if not altogether lucid, gesticulatory conversation, I endeavoured to persuade our guard commander that it would be advisable to return to Baghdad.

Our hopes rose considerably when to our surprise the vehicles were turned about and we drove back to Baghdad. En route we discussed whether my sign language had convinced our custodian that he was safer in British hands or whether his orders told him to return in case the city were shelled.

Our optimistic speculations ceased abruptly when we drew up outside a somewhat pretentious house to find that our guard commander had merely returned for some luggage and to say good-bye to numerous pretty sisters who trooped out to meet him. Their sympathetic smiles from beneath uplifted veils and their eager curiosity concerning their brother's unhappy charges were small compensation for the disappointment which we could ill conceal.

Proceeding on our way, we passed the mosques of Khazimain, and once more reaching the potherds and broken bricks of old Baghdad, the rear arabah containing three of the bandit-like guard overturned on a mound, giving its occupants a severe shaking. We felt that this was some slight recompense for our shattered hopes.

After passing the garbage heaps and repository for dead animals on the city's outskirts, we saw a donkey driven by a quite imperturbable gendarme bearing the grisly corpse of one



of his comrades stretched out on a plank on its back. Evidently this unfortunate had fallen into Arab hands, for the head was bound with bloody rags and the hands chopped off.

Some miles further on, when Baghdad had melted into the hazy horizon, a group of horsemen that had kept us in view for some time came galloping toward us. Our guards dismounted to engage them, loading their rifles and taking cover only to find the horsemen were an additional guard sent to accompany us. Our dreams of rescue or escape vanished with their arrival and thereafter each mile as we drove northwards seemed to lessen the possibilities.

Late that night we halted at a gendarme post some miles off the road. Facing it stood a battered caravanserai with delapidated exterior decorations. It was double walled and roofless, with an inner wall of many arches reminiscent of that of Omar :—

Whose doorways are alternate night and day  
Where sultan after sultan with his pomp  
Abode his hour or two and went his way.

The cattle of a neighbouring village were driven in for shelter from marauders. And here our arabahs were parked, together with a coffin caravan of pious defunct destined for burial beside the grave of the Mahommedan Shiite saint, Ali, at Kerbela. We slept in the fort-like quarters of the gendarme post with a sentry on guard at our feet, after sharing bread and dates with the not ill-disposed guard commander.

At Baghdad we had been paid ten liras each, the equivalent of nine pounds. This was a month's pay which was later reduced to seven liras, being calculated at the rate of four shillings and sixpence per day. The money received by officer prisoners from the Turks was in lieu of food and was afterwards claimed by Turkey through Switzerland from the British Government, who in turn deducted it from the officers' pay account. When regularly paid and while food was cheap, this method, which cost the Turks nothing, enabled prisoners to live. With the Turks' propensity for speculation and laxity in payment the system entailed many hardships. The amount received varied in proportion to the number of hands through which it passed, while food prices simultaneously rose to

unheard of heights, making the purchasing value of the money received still less.

Soon after dawn we reached a village on the mounds of some ancient city, where we purchased hard boiled eggs, dates and flaps of unleavened bread. These items of food, so conveniently carried in saddlebags, are the staple diet of both Arabs and Turks in Mesopotamia, and formed our means of subsistence throughout the journey and for a great part of the time in Mosul.

The bread is baked on the inside of sun-baked mud cylinders, in which a fire has been lit and withdrawn when the sides are properly heated. When carefully made the somewhat leathery bread, not unlike thick cardboard in appearance, is palatable and nourishing, though it is often remarkable for the amount of cow dung that has been picked up in the process.

We halted on the afternoon of the second day at a pretty little riverside town which our guard commander called Sawaki, though I have not been able to find it on any map.

Leaving the arabahs at the serai, we were taken to the house of the local magistrate. He was a typical Turkish civil servant, with fat, expressionless face, an ill-fitting suit and a tiny red fez that seemed in constant danger of falling off. From the flat roof of his house, while we washed from a ewer and basin brought by an ancient Arab servant, we had a glimpse of the Tigris, looking calm and peaceful, shaded by overhanging fruit trees. Scarcely an Arab of fighting age was to be seen in the town, though two infants that we saw who were waging war upon street pariahs were no doubt representative of the more adult males. They were respectively about eight and four years old, the elder carrying an ancient rifle as big as himself, and judging by the frequent yelps that followed their shots, they were evidently having some success.

We spent the greater part of the afternoon in the magistrate's office, being gazed at by various local personages, both Arab and Turk. Solemnly salaaming to the magistrate by touching heart and brow, each newcomer would squat cross-legged in front of us, then rising and salaaming to the rest of the company, would light a cigarette and commence interrogating the guard commander concerning us.

The story of our capture, repeated with much gesticulation and exaggeration by our loquacious guard commander, who

needed little encouragement to commence, was exceedingly boring after the novelty of the pantomime had worn off. Eventually our moody silence seemed to suggest that we were not enjoying the rendering as much as the rest of the company, whereupon the room was cleared and the old Arab servant was ordered to bring us food.

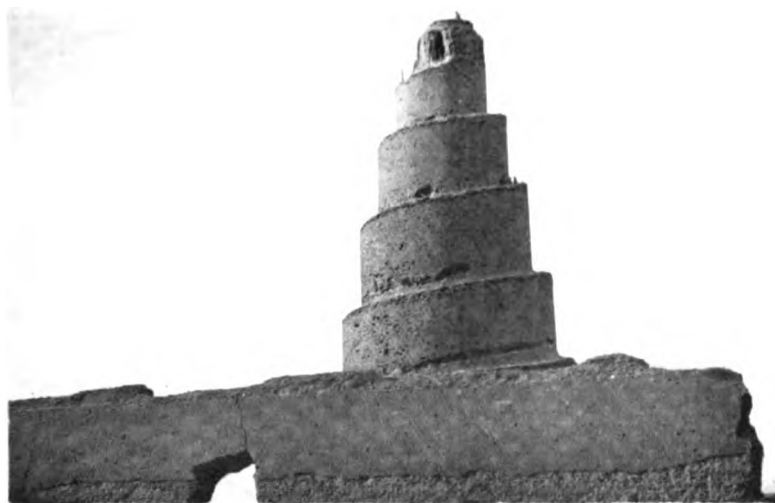
A spoon is the full complement of cutlery and silver used by the Turks, but we were not aware that it was also the custom to dine from the same dish. Our ignorance led to an almost unpardonable breach of etiquette, for while Falstaff and Pistol, in the persons of our host and guardian, were sampling cubes of melon,—a kind of hors d'œuvres—we attacked the meat and rice with such gusto that we had demolished more than the lion's share before discovering that it was intended for all.

Early next morning we were on the move again, our course approximately following the Baghdad-Samara railway, a completed section of that Constantinople-Baghdad line, with which Germany had hoped to threaten India.

Travelling seated on the floor of an arabah is not the most comfortable method of progress, but we thanked Allah that we did not have to march the two hundred odd miles to Mosul, as did many a sick and weary prisoner from Kut-el-Amarah.

The arabah, or four-wheeler, is the stage coach and carriage of the Turks, and with its hooded body much resembles a waggonette or growler except that there is no seat for the passengers, who squat on their bedding or bundles on the floor. Its springs are to be marvelled at, for on the apologies for roads in that ill-administered country they are subjected to the severest strain. The horses are never spared, being whipped with full loads across unbridged streams, pebbly ravines and sandy ground. Ill-treated and unchanged throughout long journeys, the small and wiry Arab horses are sometimes allowed to work for a strenuous day without water. Our driver, a raucous voiced Turk, who wore a fez like a diminutive clown's hat and exceedingly baggy trousers, had a barbarous method of reviving his horses. When one of the poor brutes was exhausted he would run an iron skewer into its nostrils and draw blood, which usually goaded the terrified creature to fresh efforts.

During the day we passed the ancient Medean wall, which



THE SUPPOSED TOMB OF THE WRITER OF "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS," SAMARRA.



Nebuchadnezzar constructed about 600 B.C., to protect Babylonia from the Medes and Persians who had recently destroyed Ninevah. This mighty work, fifty miles long, a hundred feet high and twenty feet thick, stretched from the Tigris to the Euphrates, and, buried beneath the dust of ages, we supposed it to be a low ridge of hills until we saw the ancient brick-work that had been disclosed where the road was cut through.

But for the wall the day's journey was over flat and uninteresting country, till the pear-shaped golden dome of the mosque of Samara came gleaming into view.

In the halcyon days of the Arabs, Samara was the residence of Mostassem, the son of Haroun-el-Raschid, and there succeeding Caliphs sought tranquillity from the warring factions of Turkish mercenaries in Baghdad. A conspicuous ruin on the right bank was declared by our guard commander to have been the house of Haroun-el-Raschid's grand vizier, and another on the left bank the palace of the Caliphs. Close to the town we saw an enormous spiralled tower, which is alleged to be the tomb of the author of the "Arabian Nights". Great as our interest undoubtedly was in these historic landmarks, nothing prevented us from falling immediately asleep in one of the very dirty cubicles of the caravanserai, where we halted in the late afternoon. We were peremptorily awakened by a cross-eyed young gendarme N.C.O. who shouted menacingly at us, but we ignored him till he adopted a more pacific attitude. One of our guard, Hadji, an Afghan who had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, spoke Pushtu, a language which Yeats-Brown knew. Hadji interpreted that the young gendarme had orders to bring us before the governor of the town.

Marching down to the Tigris, which at that point is broad and rapid, our new custodian found that the boat that had brought him across was not visible, no doubt because he had not paid a fare. Some circular coracles of the type that Herodotus saw in ancient days and known as *gufahs* were drifting downstream laden with vegetables. As the occupants ignored his shouts the gendarme drew his revolver and began sprinkling shots around them so liberally that the frightened boatmen paddled hastily towards us. Meanwhile a crazy horseboat built of boughs and rowed by two semi-naked youths drew into the bank, and after slapping the faces of the crews of the *gufahs* for their discourtesy, our N.C.O. had us ferried across in the

horse boat after it had been towed some distance up stream to allow for drift.

Under happier circumstances we would have appreciated the beauty of the old battlemented town with its double walls, roughly cobbled streets and exclusively Eastern people. But we were placed in a bare room of the Courts of Justice, or whatever may be the Turkish equivalent, and the hostile glares from the faces at door and window did not improve our artistic appetites. Our guard commander, who, to give him his due always treated us fairly, secured two chairs, one of which he took for himself. He had barely sat down before an excited Turk rushed into the room and snatched the chair from beneath him.

When at last we were brought before the Governor and his circle of sycophants, we did not welcome his interrogations about the movements of our army. Yeats-Brown informed him that we had answered all the questions we intended to answer at Baghdad. This reply exasperated him considerably and we were speedily removed to the cell. Late that night our sympathetic guard commander had our bedding and bag of bread and dates brought across the river, so that we were saved the discomfort of sleeping on the stone floor without food or water.

As the first streaks of dawn were circling the mosque dome next morning we were marched off by our swaggering guards to the water-front, glad to shake off the dust of Samara in spite of its medieval setting.

Ticret, the birthplace of Saladin, was our next halt, after a long drive over arid country crossed with stony ravines. The granite pebbles in these watercourses were the first rock formations we had seen in Mesopotamia, the whole four hundred miles of country south of that point to the Persian Gulf being absolutely stoneless, having been built up in the course of ages by the silt brought down in suspension by the Tigris and Euphrates.

The houses of Ticret, built mainly of water worn pebbles and mud, stand on the mounds of an extensive Assyrian city. Ancient inscribed stones can be seen in the walls of many of the houses. German archæologists, emulating Layard, had commenced excavations on a large mound on the left bank, though with what success we were unable to ascertain.

Leaving our conveyances in the serai, we were taken through narrow and winding streets to the quarters of the local gendarmerie. At first sight we mistook their room for a stable, so low was the ceiling. There was no chimney and a hole through the centre of the heavily cemented roof allowed the smoke of their cow-dung fires to find an exit, while a couple of low benches and a number of rifles and saddles comprised the furniture. Tea in small glasses was brought us by a gendarme, and a curious crowd of Arabs was admitted, some of them leading pure bred Persian greyhounds. They sat around and discussed us while we endeavoured to carry on a conversation with a Bimbashi who was travelling to Mosul, and after smoking some of his cigarettes we turned in on the benches, at which the picturesque crowd dispersed.

The Arabs of Tictet were of a more warlike type than any I had seen elsewhere. Gibbon records that for a long time during Persian dominion in Mesopotamia they retained their independence.

What work was done in this sleepy town seemed to be performed by the women, while the men and youth of Tictet enlivened their indolent lives with racing and coursing or parading the water-front in gorgeous clothes. In the classification of his possessions, it is said that the Arab places his horse first and his favourite wife next, but in Tictet apparently the wife takes the third place, the fleetest greyhound occupying the second. These elegant creatures, known as *saluki*, unlike the European species, have feathered ears and tail and are groomed by the Arabs with all the care of racehorses, and as puppies are tight-laced with swathings of cloth to keep them slender waisted.

Nothing broke the monotony of the next day's journey except a halt at a large ruined castle, which our guard commander declared had been destroyed by Tamerlane. The Turk has only the vaguest idea of his own history and the memory of the pyramids of skulls which Tamerlane left at Baghdad, Aleppo and other devastated cities has survived five centuries and still causes the Tartar invader to be blamed for the dilapidation of every battered ruin.

The dullness of gazing upon uninteresting waterless plains was relieved for a few moments that day by our sentry's consternation when Yeats-Brown used his monocle for the first



time. The rhythm of rumbling wheels had almost droned us to sleep, when seeing a jackal in the distance Y.-B. took one of the three monocles which the Arabs failed to loot from him on the day of our capture and fixed it to his eye. The sentry was sitting cross-legged on the floor facing us with his rifle resting on his knees, crooning some whining Arab dirge, but on the appearance of the eye-glass gripped his rifle firmly with both hands, sat bolt upright and glanced neither to right nor left until Y.-B. returned the strange device to his pocket. His perturbation puzzled us at first, but I learnt afterwards that it was the fear of the evil eye—that fear which compels the Arab and the Turk to place charms upon the foreheads of his children and strings of blue beads round the neck of his horse. No doubt the young gendarme considered he had shown great determination in withstanding the spell of this English variety of magic.

Towards dusk we arrived at a Turkish bivouac on a maize-grown river flat where two squadrons of cavalry were resting sick horses. A ragged carpet was brought for us to sit upon while tea in assorted sized glasses served on the lid of a can was kindly prepared by the senior cavalry officer, the others sitting cross-legged in a circle round us. None of the officers spoke French, which saved us the trouble of conversation, though the guard commander as usual compensated for our silence by a dramatic recital of his and our adventures, till the chilly night mists drove all to wrap themselves up in their greatcoats to sleep. As there were no tents we slept, or rather passed the night in the arabah.

Stiff with cold we moved off next morning at dawn, halting to eat our bread and dates at a gorge near a back-water of the river that was a veritable sportsman's paradise with duck, geese and innumerable grouse that had never heard the sound of a gun.

Leaving the river we travelled beside a range of bald hills over a waterless tract showing outcrops of marble and when the afternoon was well advanced we reached some hills where marble showed up in huge white patches like banks of snow. Here we were able to water the horses at a spring that splashed from pool to pool down the hillside. While we rested, a scattered force of Turks came up and proceeded to bivouac. They were a convoy of small arm ammunition, their numerous

donkeys carrying miscellaneous articles from tents to mammoth cooking pots.

The Turkish Army during the war possessed less wheeled transport than any other, practically everything that could not be carried by the soldiers themselves being transported by donkeys, camels and packhorses.

A kindly old doctor who deftly rolled cigarettes for us with one hand while he held his horse's bridle, informed us that they had come from Adrianople, the defences of that town having been evacuated after Bulgaria's entry into the war on the side of Turkey. "Fortune is with us at present, but it may change," he observed philosophically after telling us that the Austro-German armies had crushed Serbia and were in direct communication with Constantinople.

The congenial company, combined perhaps with the beauty of the scene and the bracing mountain air, detained our guard till the sun was slipping over the horizon's edge, so that it was quite dark when we arrived at a maize-covered flat similar to our halting place of the previous night. There was instantly a pandemonium of barking dogs and after much hallooing and guttural shouting some Arabs appeared out of the darkness. An animated argument ensued with our guard commander, the Arabs evidently being loth to quarter non-paying guests. Eventually they silenced the dogs and led us through the maize to a miserable grass hut in the village.

A hole was dug in the centre of the earthen floor in which a cow dung fire was lit. Around this we sat with the guard, the sheikh of the tribe and sundry of his men. Some chickens which our guard extorted from the poverty stricken sheikh were roasted at the fire and quickly devoured, the Arabs, then their women and dogs picking the remaining bones.

The primitive hut had only three sides and outside we could see the reflection of camp fires along the river's edge, where a Turkish force travelling down stream on rafts had disembarked to bivouac.

It was bitterly cold and the Arabs and our drivers talked throughout the night. Yet in spite of the wrangling over food and the attentions of the wolf-like dogs that sauntered in and out as they pleased we managed to sleep.

This miserable village of Shergat, with its handful of barbarous inhabitants, typified the instability of human works

and showed how civilised regions can slip back into savagery. For the mounds on which the village stood covered the ruins of Asshur, one time capital of Assyria and rival of Babylon.

“The glory of the world is like a flower;  
It stands in full bloom in the morning  
And fades in the heat of the day.”

At daybreak we recommenced our journey over uninteresting country where the circle of the horizon was broken only by a ridge of purple hills in the east. We walked frequently, as the sun seldom warmed us thoroughly after the cold of the night. Two gendarmes followed us closely when we walked and kept a watchful eye upon us. They looked picturesque in their royal blue uniforms, red collar, stripe on trousers, blue gaiters and brown tasselled Arab headdress roped down with an *argal* of brown camel hair. The youth who feared the monocle generally accompanied us and knowing him to be proud of his prowess as a runner I raced him along the road one frosty morning, from which time he guarded us more closely. The guard commander was a good-looking sample of the Anatolian Turk. Educated in Baghdad, he knew no English except a few nautical phrases that he had heard on the river steamers. Such expressions as “let-her-go! haul-in-the-slack! hard-aport!” pronounced as if they were single words—were fired at us each morning as a polite greeting. His rank was Bach Chaoush, corresponding to Sergeant-Major, but as he was an aspirant for commissioned rank he wore the uniform and carried the toy sword of a Moulassim Sani, or Sub-Lieutenant.

After Y.-B. discovered Hadji the Afghan could speak Pushtu, the Bach Chaoush would sit in the arabah with us with Hadji filling the double office of sentry and interpreter, and dilate on the supposed victories of his own side and the frequent reverses of ours. The crushing of Serbia was constantly brought home to us with a chuckling “Serbia” and rubbing of his palms and “fini” as he blew upon them as if blowing dust away. He was no prating braggart though and had crammed a deal of war into the twenty-three years of his life, bearing the scars of several wounds gained in the Turco-Italian and Balkan wars. He believed the war was an attempt to crush Mahommedanism and had been brought about because

we had helped to assassinate an Austrian Archduke and had stolen two battleships from Turkey, for which he considered Sir Edward Grey mainly responsible. Nevertheless he was no fanatic and we knew that like many other Turks we met, would have preferred the British as allies to the Germans as overlords.

The laxity of the Turk in making use of his own natural resources was demonstrated at a primitive oil refinery which we passed that day. Although the country south of Mosul lies in the track of the rich oil belt of Southern Russia and Persia and abounds in bituminous springs from which petroleum can be distilled, only one attempt had been made to develop them. In this instance a dozen antiquated boilers were erected at a pool thick with bitumen, that was skimmed from the surface by much-besmeared and almost naked Arabs, the result of the distilling being a crude yellow petroleum of a low flash point.

During the day we passed several pools and streams where bitumen floated thickly on the surface of the sulphurous water, the black viscous paste being gathered by Arabs for making knobbed clubs and for caulking the sides of their river craft. Another unique sight was a donkey caravan carrying empty oil tins to the refinery. Laden to the ground on either side with as many as forty tins each, the donkeys were scarcely visible beneath their towering loads, and looked like moving tin pyramids. As they came glittering towards us, one donkey, as if to dispel the illusion, shook his load free, dropping tins as he galloped past and spurred on by the cries of his irate driver and the noise of dropping tins.

Our day's trek ended at a fort-like caravanserai, outside which many camel caravans were camped. Arabahs were parked and we were taken upstairs into the presence of the *hakim* or magistrate. He was an elderly shrunken little Turk with a pronounced hook nose. He sat perched on a high chair with his legs tucked under him looking more like an ancient parrot than a human being. As usual, all the local *quid nuncs* were mustered to stare at us, the Bach Chaoush ably officiating as interlocutor.

Some hours of acting as rare exhibits made us well-nigh homicidal, but our patience was at last rewarded when the *hakim* cleared the room and produced a dish of rice and meat, which was more than welcome as somebody, whom we not

unjustly supposed to be the arabachi, had stolen what remained of our food the previous night.

Again I unwittingly broke the rules of Turkish etiquette . . . There were no spoons so we were obliged to eat from the one heaped-up tray with our fingers. At first I thought it was sheer uncouthness on the part of the Bach Chaoush when he picked up pieces of meat and laid them on my side of the dish. His surprise and evident disappointment, however, when I tossed the tit-bits back again, showed me that it was I who lacked table manners. I also learned later that this act of courtesy could only be bettered by the perfect host who placed the selected morsel in the mouth of his honoured guest.

But the etiquette which commends the guest who belches loudest after the meal as proof positive to his host that he has not overeaten is even less likely to be appreciated by the uninitiated.

Another habit peculiar to the East, to which the Westerner can never accustom himself, is that of being roused from slumber some hours before it is necessary to travel. The final morning of our journey was no exception to this unpleasant custom, and after being awakened long before dawn, we sat with the guard, some local gendarmes and numerous Arabs in the thick smoke of a cowdung fire in a chimneyless dark room for hours before even a thought was given to preparing for the journey.

A welcome change from the vitiated atmosphere of the tiny room was our arrival about mid-day at the hot springs of Humman Ali.

We had been told both in Baghdad and by our guard commander that Mosul was a prison camp *par excellence*, and in pleasant anticipation of our arrival there we decided to make ourselves as presentable as possible at the "Bath of Ali". In discussing the way we should pass the time there, Y.-B., whose penchant was horses, had suggested hunting, while I personally favoured exploratory rambles among the ruins of Ninevah. Of hunting, it proved, there was no lack—though of a kind more common on active service than in civil life—while the views of Ninevah were spoiled by the presence of iron bars and stone walls.

The hot springs of Humman Ali are alleged to be of medicinal value and consist of two pools of different temper-

atures. They are enclosed with masonry, the domes giving them the appearance of the orthodox Turkish bath. As we removed the beards and grime of the past eight days from our persons, a rheumaticy old Arab tottered in, and after a preliminary soak in the tepid pool, spent a pleasant half hour in the other. It was hot enough for cooking purposes, but the old patriarch, who no doubt would have shivered in Hades, playfully gathered bitumen, and at length emerged considerably rejuvenated.

Continuing our journey, we traversed a range of rugged hills, and, descending to an expansive plain through which the Tigris wound its tortuous way, we saw the distant domes and minarets of Mosul standing alone in the wilderness where Ninevah, Calah and Nimrud once had flourished.

Soon we passed through the fringe of orchards and were clattering along the roughly cobbled streets. At a massive, crudely built barracks, we were brought before the Commandant. He was a cruel looking Bimbashi of Infantry, with a large head, small piercing eyes, Prussian moustache and conspicuous top boots. Through an interpreter he curtly inquired if we were well and being answered in the affirmative signalled for us to be removed.

We were taken upstairs to a dimly lighted room where half a dozen armed Arabs lay on sheepskins on the stone floor. A low rough door opened into a smaller room that was even darker and when our eyes became accustomed to the gloom we discerned two figures stretched out on ramshackle Arab cots, which were the only furniture.

They proved to be Captain B. S. Atkins and Lieut. W. H. Treloar, who had been captured two months before us. So wasted and feeble were they with fever and dysentery that they were hardly recognisable.

They enlightened us in very few words regarding the treatment we were to expect, so straightway before our escort departed we clamoured for another room. After some demur the request was granted and a similar adjoining room was allotted us, with furniture consisting of two grass mats.

## CHAPTER IX

### NEAR ANCIENT NINEVAH

“**M**OSUL to-day is the least accessible spot in the dominions of the Sultan,” wrote David Fraser in 1908. Fate and the Turk had nevertheless succeeded in getting us there and during a sojourn of two and a half months in that city of the wilderness we had more than sufficient time to wish its inaccessibility had been greater.

The barracks where we were quartered consisted of a two-storied block of buildings surrounding a quadrangle about seventy-five yards square. Its stone walls were massive and heavily cemented and the rooms roughly ceilinged with poles. The upper cells, in one of which we were confined, opened upon a narrow balcony that was thick with the dirt and excretion of ages. In fact the whole untidy structure, together with the lack of sanitation and the barbarity displayed in the treatment of prisoners, reminded us of some scene of the Inquisition, or of the more remote period of the Assyrian kings.

The building served the many purposes of a halting place for troops en route for the Mesopotamian and Russian fronts, a training school for conscripted Arabs and a military prison. Many Turkish reinforcements, after crossing the two hundred miles of desert from the railhead at Ras-el-Ain, were embarked on rafts at Mosul and carried down stream by the swiftly flowing Tigris to the defence of Baghdad, for both the Euphrates and the Tigris in great measure compensated for the break in the Constantinople-Baghdad railway.

These rafts or *keleks* consisted of a framework of boughs lashed to numerous inflated goats' skins, and were capable of supporting great weights. Troops frequently arrived before their rafts were ready as the skins had to be deflated and brought back by donkey caravan from Baghdad. Meanwhile they quartered at the Mosul barracks for a well earned rest,

the interval being spent in ridding themselves of vermin, for which the Turkish soldier, more than any other animal—human or otherwise—seems particularly partial. We were soon introduced to these noisome pests. The Turks' idea of sanitation of any description is most primitive, so that the state of the courtyard and the few yards of balcony outside our cells where we exercised can well be imagined, after the extended stay of a battalion or two.

Roped together by the shoulders and further secured in pairs with wooden handcuffs, strings of footsore Arabs arrived to be trained,—food for cannon on some distant front. They varied in age from mere boys to white-bearded patriarchs, having been rounded up from villages already depleted of horses, arms and food, to be marched great distances by mounted gendarmes who drove them with whips like cattle . . . Malcontents in the British Empire might do well to experience some such probationary citizenship in Turkey in time of war to appreciate the manifold advantages of being British.

On arrival, the Arabs were quartered in two large cells where there was scarcely room for them to squat huddled together upon the stone floor. Twice a day they were taken out en masse for a necessary purpose, but for the rest they lived or died manacled together during a preliminary course of intimidation for two or three weeks. Their cells adjoined ours and we marvelled how any of the two or three hundred human beings could survive the continued discomfort and the overpowering stench and vitiated atmosphere.

When they were considered sufficiently curbed, their handcuffs were knocked off and they were paraded before the Commandant in the barrack square below. Those who were too ill to walk were dragged by the arms down the stone steps to the courtyard by their gaolers and placed in the line with the others.

One day shortly after our arrival, Ibrahim Ghani Bey, the Commandant, favoured us with a sample of his disciplinary and curative methods which left us in no doubt as to what manner of man he was. The starved conscripts were lined up in the courtyard for the Commandant's inspection, the latter appearing in heavy top boots and carrying a stout riding whip. He spat full in the face of those who displeased him, rewarded others with blows upon the head from his knobbed riding whip,



and completed the inspection with a violent attack upon an old man whom he evidently suspected of malingering.

The victim had been dragged by the arms from his cell, his body bumping heavily down the stone steps, and after much rough-handling he had been induced to assume a semi-erect position in the line. His real or fancied infirmities were explained by the corporal of the guard, whereupon the Commandant seized the offender by the beard, kicked him in the stomach, and after throwing him to the ground stamped on his bent back until he was straightened out. A few more kicks brought the sufferer to his feet, where he somehow succeeded in remaining until the inspection was completed, receiving a few final kicks in farewell. As we did not see the victim again we were unable to ascertain whether this primitive lumbago treatment was effective.

The survivors of this hard school when sufficiently tractable, were armed with nondescript weapons, and if sufficiently affluent bought themselves positions as gaolers. The remainder were given a course of recruit training that was as inefficient as it was ludicrous. Clad in long, ragged robes of various hues, they marched around the courtyard to the deafening blare of trumpets played by Arabs whose musical education was also in the embryo stage. The goose step as performed by this motley company in ill-fitting heelless slippers was a welcome touch of comedy from the daily round of tragedy, while an occasional lecture on musketry was the *pièce de résistance*. On such occasions a Turkish N.C.O. would explain the intricacies of the modern rifle to a squatting circle of disinterested and ignorant pupils. Those immediately beneath his gaze showed apparent interest, but he would discover on looking round that the majority of the class was more absorbed in the interesting game of pursuit and capture. A violent kick, where it hurt most, was the instructor's favourite form of chastisement, and our anticipations as to which would be the next to feel the force of his boot whiled away many a weary hour.

The fort left nothing to be desired as a military prison. Its high thick walls and well guarded gateways made escape a practical impossibility, while it lacked none of the inquisitorial paraphernalia usually employed as a deterrent against crime. The bastinado was constantly in use and we could hear the howls of the beaten both by day and night. In this form of

punishment the feet of the offender are placed through two loops of rope attached to a pole, though sometimes the sling of a rifle is used. The pole is then turned until the feet are held tightly in place, and while the victim is held down on his back he is beaten on the soles of the bare feet. About thirty strokes seemed usually sufficient for the ordinary Arab, and judging by the yells the pain is excruciating.

For what crimes the various soldiers and gendarmes were imprisoned there I do not know, but many of them were chained to the walls of their cells with chains strong enough to hold elephants. . . . Frequently we saw them clanking across the courtyard to the Commandant's office escorted by a sentry and supporting the loose end of the chain, the other end being shackled to a ring round the ankle.

We learned that there were other prisoners-of-war at the barracks besides our two sick comrades. About a dozen of these were sepoys who had been captured during the fighting at Shaiba, Nasiriyeh and Kut-el-Amarah, while the remainder belonged to the British Consular guard, which had been interned in Baghdad at the outbreak of war. The guard consisted originally of a Subadar and fifty sepoys of the 102nd King's Grenadiers, but before our arrival at Mosul eight had died.

A British Resident, with a sepoy guard and a gunboat had been stationed in Baghdad since the Napoleonic wars, a concession which was conceded with bad grace by the Turk and aroused the jealousy of rival powers. At the commencement of hostilities the Resident and the gunboat *Comet* had been allowed to leave, but the guard of sepoys was taken prisoner. They had been marched to Mosul, their winter clothing taken from them, and had spent over a year in the narrow confines of their cells. Their Subadar, Haziri Singh, was a fine sample of the Indian officer. His cell adjoined ours, so we were able to talk with him and admire his stoical optimism and patriotism while walking on the twenty-five yards of balcony between two latrines that was allowed us for exercise.

As far as I was able to ascertain, none of his men survived their captivity, only one living through the awful march to Ras-el-Ain, which followed their confinement at Mosul. The kindly old Subadar was eventually an easy victim to typhus, heart-broken at the loss of his men, who were devoted to him as he was to them.

Sergt. Blaker, of the Telegraph Section of Engineers, was the only British prisoner in addition to Atkins and Treloar. He had been taken four months before by a raiding party of Turkish and Arab horsemen when carrying out telegraph repair work behind the British lines. Having landed from their launch to repair cut wires near an Arab village, he and his two assistants were attacked. Returning to the river they found the launch had also been attacked and had moved off. With his two companions he was quickly taken prisoner, while a havildar and six sepoy on the launch kept up a running fight with the horsemen on the bank. The pilot of the launch was eventually shot dead and the boat drifting to the bank was boarded by Arabs. The wounded, declared Blaker, when he came surreptitiously to our cell one evening, were stoned to death by the women of the village, and the havildar who had put up such a stout fight had his throat cut. Blaker and one of his native assistants had then to accompany the enemy cavalry on foot, running beside them for two whole days until Baghdad was reached.

After the march to Mosul his companion died and Blaker himself arrived so weak and ill that he would also have died from exhaustion and fatigue but for some food and clothes that Capt. Atkins had sent him.

Atkins and Treloar began to show improvement from the day of our arrival, for though we could do practically nothing to help them, we had broken the hopeless monotony of the past three months. We fancied that we understood the Turk and that we would soon bring about a betterment in the conditions and treatment, though our comrades assured us otherwise. After much clamouring we were taken before the Commandant, who listened to our request for lighting and wood, for exercise and washing, and better treatment for the sepoy. We were told we could visit the bath and bazaar once a week, that we could buy what furniture we liked, and that we had only to make application in regard to any grievance and it would be immediately remedied. Much elated, we informed the sick men of the result. They pitied us, asking if we were still so unsophisticated as to put any faith in a Turk's promise.

And in the light of subsequent events we found that we were new-born babes. We did manage to get a bath every two or three weeks after much agitation, but we never had sufficient

money to buy furniture, as our pay was kept so long in arrears, while we were as closely confined as the worst criminals. The treatment of the sepoys daily became worse and all complaints or requests to see the Commandant were ignored. We also discovered that all the Turkish we needed to understand were the three words commencing with "Y", *yok*, *yassak* and *yarın*, which signified respectively, "no" in all its phases, "forbidden" and "to-morrow".\*

A half-witted but cunning and slothful Arab had acted as servant to Atkins and Treloar and from the date of our arrival became the still more inefficient factotum for the four of us. Hamid had some kind of compact with the second-in-command at the barracks, a corpulent Bimbashi, and in consequence the brokerage they secretly levied on our purchases caused a serious increase in the cost of living. The Arab knew a few words of Hindustani and when it pleased him, in the lucid moments when he was not chattering to himself, he could be made to understand. But as he was quite wild and knew nothing about cooking or cleanliness we found it necessary to do most of the cooking ourselves with handfuls of brushwood at the hole in the wall of the guardroom that served as a fireplace. We also learned that it was unwise to chide or threaten Hamid, for once when we had urged him to hurry he upset our evening meal, consisting of a pot of rice and dates, upon the filthy floor. In all humility we had to scoop it up, while with difficulty restraining a natural desire to beat him soundly.

After a week in Mosul Major Reilly and Lieut. Fulton joined us. Both had been shot down by artillery over Ctesiphon while flying Martinsyde scouts fitted with Gnome rotary engines—a machine unfitted for active service owing to the vulnerability of the engine.

Unshaven, dirty and utterly miserable, they looked very different from when we had last seen them in the mess at Aziziyeh. Reilly was flying at 4000 feet when a shell put his engine out of action, a loose engine part tearing a hole in the engine cowl. He glided to earth and was immediately attacked by Arabs who struck him and commenced to strip him of his clothes. His Wellington boots puzzled them, though they did

\* It is already three months since we left Kut. During that time I cannot recall one Turkish promise that they have kept. This is a performance, but for us to have so far survived it and also their indifference, is an achievement. E. O. Mousley. "Secrets of a Kuttite."

their best to get them off and were standing on him when some Turks fortunately arrived.

Fulton was flying at 5500 feet when the pellets of a well aimed shrapnel punctured his petrol tank, forcing him to land. He was handled roughly like Reilly, but his captors received the shock of their lives when a bomb exploded, killing one of them while they were looting the aeroplane.

The new arrivals were in part British part Arab attire, and as they had come on donkey back from Baghdad, had travelled less comfortably than we had.

We applied for a second servant but were refused, which no doubt rejoiced Hamid's greedy heart, for the employment of an assistant would have meant a division of the spoils.

The purchasing of food in the bazaar was sufficient reason to keep Hamid away from morn till dusk, when he would return to boil a hotch-potch of various foods, of which both he and his family also partook.

The food was not unwholesome, as eggs, sour milk, honey and poultry were comparatively cheap. One soon loses fastidiousness as a prisoner, and dirt ceases to hold any terrors. The acorn-like dates that find their way northwards from Basra are the windfalls and rejects that cannot be exported. After much handling en route and in fly-infested bazaars, they bear decided evidence of their travels, but we learned to accept interesting foreign matter as inevitable.

In that much over-rated land "flowing with milk and honey", we also acquired a taste for sour buffalo milk, and honey that was principally remarkable for the number of dead but digestible bees that it contained.

As we had no books, time dragged heavily, though soon after our arrival in Mosul we had made a pack of cards from bits of cigarette boxes, while draughts played with buttons were a further distraction. In the mornings we walked countless times up and down the balcony until the sun shone upon our little promenade, bringing clouds of flies that somehow survived the low temperatures. Then we would sit in its warmth with nothing more elevating to do than watch local barbers shave the heads of scores of dusky Turkish soldiers, while others squatting in the courtyard and galleries hunted lice upon their clothes.

Sometimes on our application when a moderately humane

*chaoush* with brothers in the British service was in command of the guard, the sepoys also would be allowed to sit in the courtyard outside their cells, when the welcome warmth upon their emaciated bodies encouraged them to shed their rags to hunt vermin. We dropped them what money and cigarettes we could spare, but were able to do little among so many. It was pitiful to see them daily growing thinner and thinner, till we could tell almost to a certainty who would be next to die.

One morning there was a feverish spring cleaning of our promenade and a quantity of cement was emptied into the pools of filth. The sudden cleanliness was explained when a German medical officer arrived, followed by all the interpreters and barracks staff. He told us that he had seen us going to the bath but had only been permitted to enter our prison after a great deal of difficulty. Explaining that his position with the Turks was a very awkward one, he apologised for not adopting a more friendly attitude. Assuring him that none of the Turks knew sufficient English to follow our conversation, he asked if we had any complaints to make, for he would inform a certain Pasha—evidently Von der Goltz—when he arrived in Baghdad. I told him that though our treatment was what criminals would expect, it did not bear comparison with that endured by the sepoys, who were treated like cattle and with insufficient food and clothes and no bedding whatsoever were slowly dying of starvation and cold.

He promised to do what he could. . . . And five large blankets that arrived a day or two later to make life a trifle more bearable for twenty-five sepoys were evidently purchased by the doctor himself.

It was satisfying to learn from Kut-el-Amarah prisoners whom we met later in Anatolia that after our departure from Mosul the brutal Ibrahim Hukki Bey was replaced by a more humane Turk, while Mosul became one of the few bright spots on the awful march of that unfortunate thirteen thousand.

No doubt the German doctor was indirectly responsible for the change of Commandant, for it is a singular thing, vouched for by the majority of prisoners in Turkey, that in spite of German ruthlessness and callousness in Europe, the German in Turkey frequently showed a friendly spirit towards enemy prisoners. The principal reason for this difference was the fact that the type of staff officer sent to the Eastern front was a man

of culture and linguistic ability, who by travel alone had lost most of his Teutonic arrogance. The mutual hatred and distrust shared by the Germans and Turks was also an incentive for both to voice grievances to a third party. For the Germans openly despised the Turks as barbarians who at the best had only a veneer of civilisation, while the Turks on the other hand hated their imperious overlords who, by the will of Enver Pasha and his satellites, must be obeyed.

When I was in solitary confinement in Baghdad a German Colonel visited me and asked if I were well and if I wanted anything. I replied sullenly that I wanted nothing. "You miss your pipe very much?" he inquired. "They cannot be obtained here," I answered. And though I did not expect it, a secondhand but none the less acceptable pipe reached me at Mosul. . . . And many prisoners could recount similar slight but welcome acts of kindness, perhaps the greatest service being the saving of many exhausted men by German motor transport during ghastly marches in the Taurus mountains.

From two diminutive bootblacks who peddled mirrors and other trifles to the troops I surreptitiously bought a small pocket book, ink and pen, and commenced a diary, which I continued until the time of my escape, in microscopic handwriting in seven tiny books made from scraps of paper. Concealed in my puttees, in my hat, and in devious places for the next two years, this record had many escapes during the spasmodic though thorough searches by our captors.

Some early diary entries read as follows:—

"Dec. 25th, 1915. Christmas Day was not our merriest. For the past week we have not had a piastre between us, though Hamid has bought a little food on credit. The cold weather has set in, and, in strong contrast to Mesopotamia, there is little sun. Moreover it is raining heavily and the roof is leaking." Later. "Our pay is very much in arrears, in Atkins and Treloar's case, over a month. After much clamouring we have received a week's pay, so decided to celebrate. Hamid managed to purchase two bottles of alleged whisky and a goose, bringing the whisky, like a good Musselman, concealed in the folds of his capacious trousers. In taste and smell it was much like methylated spirits, but mixed with milk was drinkable. Treloar and I tried to roast the goose in *ghee* on a brushwood fire which we lit in the guardroom. *Ghee* is

a rancid fat that is most disagreeable at first, and as our knowledge of cooking was rather rudimentary, we burnt the precious goose. . . . We were told to-day that twenty-five officers and six hundred men had been made prisoner by the Turks. We naturally disbelieve the story, but fear that some may have been taken."

"New Year's Eve. We saw three persons arrive whose nationality we could only guess at, until they were brought up from the courtyard. They proved to be Lieut.-Commander Goad, Royal Indian Marine; Capt. H. G. Brodie, 108rd Mah-rattas, and Lieut. G. C. Flynn, Indian Army Reserve. Brodie alone wore any semblance of uniform, and with ragged beards, ill-fitting oddments of civilian clothes, and Turkish "enver-reas", as the bucket-shaped army hat is called, their closest friends would not have known them. Conditions have been slightly improved by their arrival, in that two additional Arabs, one even more imbecile than Hamid, have been allowed us, and our squalid cells have been given a much-needed sweep."

From the new arrivals we first heard details of the battle of Ctesiphon and the retirement of the British towards Kut. Ctesiphon was the first check received by the Sixth Division in an unbroken series of victories. Four days of desperate fighting resulted in the main defences before Baghdad being wrested from the Turk, but with 4267 casualties out of a total of 11,000. Withdrawal and a retreat before superior numbers to the strategic position of Kut-el-Amarah, was the only alternative.

I was particularly interested to know if the night march and attack on the flank redoubt of the enemy's front line had been successful, as the location of the redoubt on our map had been fixed by my bearings with the crude garden rake device. As the redoubt was at the extremity of the front line, and a mistake of a few degrees in fixing its position might have cost many lives, it was with some relief that I learnt that that part of the operation had been successful.

The failure of the British attack upon Baghdad, and the historic and remarkable battle of Ctesiphon, whether it be regarded as a victory or as a defeat, will always redound to the credit of the troops engaged. But for the timely arrival of a Turkish Division from the Russian front on the first day of the battle the British victory would have been complete.



Capt. Brodie had been wounded and taken prisoner at Um Atabul, where the retreating British had faced about and inflicted severe losses upon the Turk. A bullet entering his right side and passing between the muscles of the back, had jumped the depression of the spine and remained imbedded in a corresponding position in his left side. He was considered too badly wounded to be moved, when the British retired. Bullets from his own troops from their new position soon forced him to crawl to safety in a ditch. A Turk searched him, tried on his boots, which were too small, then took him before an officer who had his wound roughly dressed. With two wounded men of the Oxforas and three sepoys he was then marched from place to place till evening when he was put in a tent without food or water.

The story of the other two prisoners was equally interesting.

While the rearguard action at Um Atabul was being fought, trouble was experienced on the river through the constant grounding of ships and barges in the shallow reaches. In this remarkable "encounter" battle, the opposing artillery had come into action at a little over a thousand yards as soon as dawn disclosed their position. The five British gunboats of the force, *Firefly*, *Comet*, *Sumana*, *Shurir* and *Sheitan*, assisted the artillery with their fire and heroically helped barges which got into difficulties. The monitor *Firefly* had a tall mast, which readily gave the enemy guns their range, and she was soon hit amidships and disabled by some guns that had been galloped to a favourable enfilade position on the Tigris bank. The *Comet*, which had been attached before the war to the Embassy at Baghdad and had had many vicissitudes during the campaign, proceeded to take the *Firefly* in tow. Unfortunately the *Firefly* drifted as she came alongside, and soon the *Comet* was also hit and ablaze. The *Sumana*, which was really an armed steam yacht and which did yeoman work afterwards in the siege of Kut, then gallantly came alongside and waited till the crews of both vessels were taken off.

The *Shurir*, which had an ammunition barge and two Supply barges filled with wounded and Supply and Transport personnel, ran aground shortly afterwards in a difficult reach of the river, and to save the ammunition barge had to cast off the barge containing the wounded, trusting that the *Sumana* would take it in tow. The latter carried the Senior Naval

officer and the crews of the disabled gunboats and would not risk the delay of attempting this, but Lieut.-Commander Goad with a steam launch and the Flying Corps motor boat was sent back to take off as many men as possible. With Lieut. Flynn of the ammunition barge they reached a stranded barge that lay in midstream and embarked about thirty men, meantime being under fire both from the enemy artillery and from Turks and Arabs on the banks. Soon after leaving the barge the launch ran aground and its occupants crowded into the motor boat. In the scramble to get aboard the engine clutch was damaged and all were retransferred to the launch and the motor boat cast off. Try as they would the launch could not be refloated and to save useless slaughter Goad hoisted the white flag. A number of Arabs swam out from the shore, swarmed aboard brandishing knives and stripped the unfortunate prisoners of their clothes. The Arabs showed their usual gentle attentions to Goad and would have cut off his finger for a ring had it not slipped off in time, for which he was thanked by being struck in the face with his own boots. Turks on shore who saw the looting opened fire again and the Arabs made off.

There were thirty British ranks aboard the launch, consisting of N.C.Os. of the Supply and Transport Corps, some sick and wounded, regimental clerks and two Flying Corps mechanics. The two barges carried four hundred sick and wounded sepoys, and on another barge that had been abandoned further up-stream, were five British and fifty sepoy sick. On one of the larger barges six of the sick were killed by the Turkish fire and several wounded.

Goad was left with a pair of short drawers and a coal sack, in which last he made holes for his head and arms. Flynn possessed only a pair of socks, while the remainder of the British were as scantily clad, though few of the Indians had been looted. The situation was too tragic to appear ludicrous. They were marched two miles over thorny ground with bare feet to the camp, where Goad was interrogated by both Nouriddin Pasha, the Turkish commander, and Khalil Pasha, the latter being the young general whose reinforcements brought from the Russian front had saved Baghdad and who later recaptured Kut-el-Amarah.

The officers were given slippers and old clothes by Turkish officers and a few old coats were distributed among the men.

Next morning with the thirty-four British ranks, one Indian officer and three hundred sepoy, as well as Captain Brodie, they received orders to *march* to Baghdad, eighty miles distant, the officers only being mounted on donkeys.

The Indians had not been stripped of their clothes, so suffered less than the British, though many of them had wounds that needed urgent attention, and some dropped out with exhaustion, but were beaten by the escort until they rejoined the straggling column.

Halting that night at Aziziyeh, one British prisoner died of pneumonia. The officers represented to the Turkish Commandant that the men were too weak to be moved other than by boat and a boat was promised. Nevertheless they moved on again on foot next morning and no attention was given the wounded, though fifteen donkeys were provided for the worst cases. The escort lost its way in a marsh that night so all had to sleep in the open. Sufficient blankets were taken from the sepoy to allow one to every two Britishers, who were gradually clothing themselves from the bodies of wounded sepoy who died.

Leaving two dead, they recommenced their march at dawn next day, reaching Ctesiphon late that night. The British were suffering severely from the marching, their feet and legs being cruelly cut and scratched with camel thorn through which their well shod guard often drove them. An Indian follower succumbed on arrival and a wounded Supply and Transport clerk died shortly afterwards from a combination of exhaustion and dysentery. The sun became exceedingly hot at midday and water was only procurable at rare intervals on the journey, so that they were parched with thirst by day and at night were bitterly cold. Brodie told me that during a halt that day, a sepoy showed him a shell wound in his hand which through inattention had become fly-blown and full of maggots.

Owing to the increasing number of sick, five camels and four ponies were provided by the commandant of Ctesiphon. Five sepoy were left behind and soon after starting another sepoy died and two others were left to their fate.

Baghdad was reached about dusk, and while the officers were driven ahead in an arabah to hospital the Arab inhabitants beat and spat upon the starved and exhausted men as they painfully limped through the crowded streets.

As previously mentioned, the officers were then sent on donkey back to Mosul, the surviving men going *on foot by a longer route via Kirkuk*.

These were the twenty-five officers and six hundred men we had heard about on Christmas Day. And knowing what they had already suffered on the march to, and while imprisoned in, Baghdad, we wondered if any could survive the further two hundred and fifty miles of marching to Mosul. With apprehension we awaited the arrival of the survivors.

## CHAPTER X

### GUESTS OF THE UNSPEAKABLE

**O**N the morning of January 10th, 1916, a melancholy procession of two hundred and forty-nine men, including seven Britishers, arrived at Mosul. As they tottered into the prison square they presented a pitiable sight. All were in rags, gaunt, dirty and unbelievably thin. A few who were too weak to walk were feebly clutching the donkeys to which they were tied, and the corpse of a sepoy bound face downwards on a donkey brought up the rear of the wretched party.

The Britishers were in a deplorable state, their feet being so cut and swollen that they could scarcely stand. Some of them had neither coats nor trousers, a tattered fragment of blanket being worn skirtwise, while ragged cotton shirts taken from dead sepoys hung about their shoulders. One of them waved to me where I stood looking down on the courtyard and with some difficulty I recognised him as Air-Mechanic P., who, with Sergt. P. of the R.F.C., during the retreat from Ctesiphon, had gallantly gone back with Lieut.-Commander Goad in the Flying Corps motor boat, in an endeavour to rescue the troops who had been abandoned in the stranded barges.

A ragged piece of blanket about his middle, a tattered cotton garment around his shoulders, and a sepoy's cap, were his entire clothing. He walked on tiptoe, his heels being too swollen and painful to touch the ground, the toes being inserted into what had once been a pair of slippers, while in walking he held the wet blanket away from him so that it would not aggravate the sores that had formed by the chafing of a month's marching. Exposure and exhaustion had reduced him to a skeleton, while some of his comrades were so thin that they seemed at the point of death.

We immediately collected what money, spare clothes and bedding we possessed, and with some milk and oranges sent them down to the wrecks of humanity below. They ate and drank like starving animals. Then without any medical inspection, *the whole party of two hundred and forty-nine was put into one cell!*

Ill-clothed and underfed after a month's marching in the depth of winter, most of them were suffering from dysentery, and not a few had developed pneumonia, yet instead of receiving medical attention and suitable food they were herded together in a cell where there was barely room to lie down.

By permission of the well-disposed *chaoush*, Air-Mechanic P. surreptitiously visited our cell, and from then on, whenever the friendly *chaoush* commanded the guard, three or four of the British or Indian prisoners came up at night, when we were able to feed them well and do our best to cheer and encourage them.

P. had suffered severely, yet related his adventures and misfortunes in a light-hearted way that did him credit. The cap and tattered shirt that he wore he had taken from a sepoy that had died on the march. With the other British he had reached Baghdad without boots, but after some days was issued with a pair of slippers for the march to Mosul. These had soon worn through, and on the last stage of the journey from Kirkuk his feet were badly cut, the uncovered heels festering and swelling around the ankles. Each day they marched about twenty-five miles, and during the five weeks since their capture they had been unable to wash. But a march through a swamp at a time when he was about to drop out through lameness was P's salvation, for the mud and water reduced the swelling sufficiently to enable him to go on. Between Kirkuk and Mosul they were allowed one chupattie a day—a chupattie weighing about six ounces. During the last two days they had nothing whatsoever, which accounted for their famished state on reaching Mosul.

From Air-Mechanic P. and Sergt. P. and others of the seven Britishers who had survived we learned the details of their inhuman treatment from the time their three officers had been separated from them.

In Baghdad the four hundred Britishers and Indians were put in one large room in the barracks where there was barely

room for them to sit down. No bedding was issued, no exercise was allowed, very little food was given them, and though many were suffering from dysentery they were only permitted to go to the latrines twice a day, when they were all taken together. After two day's confinement the names were taken of the most seriously wounded and sick. Two days later, and the ninth after their capture, the sufferers were sent to hospital. The remaining prisoners were then inspected preparatory to the march to Mosul. Those who had severe external injuries were allowed to remain, but any who were suffering from internal complaints, however serious, stood little chance, with the result that one Indian officer, three warrant officers and three hundred and eighty-seven other ranks left for Mosul via Kirkuk.

Of the thirty-four British who were stripped of their clothing on the day of their capture, only four survived their captivity, so that where no useful purpose can be served by mentioning names I have suppressed those of deceased soldiers, having already submitted them on an official report. Names that are mentioned are in most cases those of men who survived.

The further story of the march from Baghdad, as related by the survivors, I recorded as follows in my diary :—

“A pair of slippers had been issued to *most* of those without boots. The Turkish guard consisted of one officer and twenty mounted gendarmes. The column left at midday, and twenty miles were covered, when, well after dark, the column halted for the night. An Indian follower died that night. Next day twenty-five miles were marched and five men died. The gendarmes were extremely brutal to stragglers, kicking and beating them most unmercifully when the Turkish officer was not present. The sick that dropped from exhaustion were flogged to their feet, and when hoisted by their comrades on to donkeys, of which there were fifty, they invariably died. The guard also took a fiendish delight in riding beside the sick and flogging the donkeys to a race, just to enjoy seeing the helpless men on their backs fall off. One of the guard *broke the butt of his rifle on a sepoy's shoulder*. Air-Mechanic P. said the sepoy was marching beside him at the time and as far as he knew had offended in no possible way. The injury was so severe that the sepoy died the same day.

“One Abdullah, an Indian pilgrim to Mecca who had become

a Turkish subject, was attached by the Turks to the party to act as interpreter. He was responsible for many deaths, as he had the allotting of donkeys to those too weak to walk, and as only those who paid him could get a donkey he made a considerable amount of money thereby. No matter how ill a man might be he could only obtain a lift on payment. The British and those of the Indians who had been robbed could not obtain a mount even if they were at the point of death, so that in every case it was the poorest who received the least assistance.

"The Turkish officer in command was, in comparison, humane and helpful, though naturally he could not see all that went on, and the prisoners were afraid to make a complaint before the journey's end in case the guard would murder the informer. The Turkish officer rode ahead each evening in search of a halting place, where he arranged sleeping quarters and ordered food. Ample food was served to the prisoners at the order of the officer and two pounds of bread, two pounds of rice or dates and eight cigarettes per day were allowed each man.

"The cold throughout the march was intense. Twenty miles a day were averaged throughout the march to Kirkuk, and two or three men died daily! Sometimes they were found dead in the morning where they had lain down for the night, or on the donkeys they rode. Others, too footsore and weary to continue the seemingly endless march, dropped out beside the road and were left to the jackals or the mercy of passing Arabs.

"Thirty Indians died en route. Kirkuk was reached on Christmas Eve, after ten days' marching. It is incomprehensible why men so sick and badly clothed should have had the already long journey to Mosul further lengthened by a detour of fifty miles.

"At Kirkuk the treatment was even worse than Baghdad. For two nights a party of them were locked in a room where there was just room to lie down. No bedding was given them and the floor was of bare stones that were cold and damp. More than half of them were suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery that had been brought on or aggravated by the cold and exposure, and as they were not allowed out of the room at night they were soon in an abominable and pitiful plight.



"The food consisted of three small cakes of rye-bread each day, with a bowl of rice soup in the morning and soup containing three to four ounces of meat at night. The quantity and quality of such food was insufficient and unsuitable for sick and weary men and fourteen more died during the first five days.

"The remainder were paraded and given the option of staying in Kirkuk or proceeding to Mosul. Those that had been admitted to hospital were neglected, and when one of the men had asked a doctor if he might be allowed to wash and be given some hospital clothes as he was covered with lice, the doctor told him not to worry about vermin as they were common to all, and opening the neck of his tunic he showed the patient lice on his own collar and numerous bites on his neck. They were told that they were being given insufficient food as there was a shortage of provisions in the town, though at that period of the war this could not have been true.

"The British prisoners had reported the gendarmes who had killed the sepoy and another who forcibly took clothing from prisoners. They heard later that the offenders had each been given two years' imprisonment, which it was hoped was true.

"As the prisoners imagined that treatment at Mosul could not be worse than at Kirkuk, all those who could move applied to go to Mosul. The officer who had commanded the guard unfortunately returned to Baghdad so that the two hundred and fifty-four men who recommenced the march were placed under an escort consisting of a sergeant and six mounted gendarmes, assisted by eighteen *bashi-bazouks* (irregulars).

"Thirty-five donkeys were provided, twenty of which were at once appropriated by the *bashi-bazouks*. Soon after starting the sergeant told them that no money had been given him to buy food, though it is almost certain that he kept any money that was given him for himself and his accomplices. He had no control over his men who were as cruel as the previous escort.

"Throughout the march, to humiliate the British, he made them march behind the Mohammedans of the party, and on arrival at a halting place would give orders for shelter to be found for the Mohammedan Indians only.

"At one stage of the journey forty prisoners were confined

in a room measuring *ten feet by ten feet*, and in the vitiated atmosphere of this Black Hole three men died. Twelve men, of whom three were British, died during the march, the last death—that of the sepoy we had seen tied to the donkey, being discovered at Mosul Bridge.”

The heavy mortality among prisoners-of-war in Turkey is not generally known, and the reputation that the Turk earned on Gallipoli as a stubborn foe and clean fighter, biassed the British public in his favour. Disclosures subsequent to the war, however, and the fact that so few of the Turk's prisoners survived their captivity, caused a change in public opinion.

Turkey was a closed book to all but the secret service for the greater part of the war, for the Turk did not commence to exchange prisoners till 1918, and no first hand evidence of his treatment was obtained until a few months before the armistice. On the other hand, the German treatment of prisoners soon became common knowledge, as prisoners were exchanged to neutral countries and even to England at a comparatively early date.

All information that came from Turkey during the war was carefully censored, and the cunning Turk established a parole camp at Gedos at the latter end of 1917, where officers who gave their word that they would not escape were well treated. The correspondence of these officers to their relatives was a useful asset to Turkey's good name, for letters regarding good treatment were assured of reaching their destination. Finding their way to the newspapers, a false impression was created, the public naturally imagining that the preferential treatment given to parole givers was enjoyed in all Turkish prison camps.

Even the Ottoman Red Crescent seemed imbued with the national trait of untruthfulness. Enquiries regarding prisoners were either ignored or evaded. Our Red Cross was answered with general statements such as that all prisoners were being well treated or that money rather than food was more helpful to prisoners, which of course was untrue and allowed the Turk to profit by exchange.\*

The stories of repatriated prisoners, particularly soldiers, have since dissipated any idea that the Turk has renounced his

\* If our representatives on the Prisoner of War Committee in Switzerland had included some efficient soldier who had known by practical dealings the methods and delays and subterfuges of the Turks, we would have had some safeguards. E. O. Mousley. "Secrets of a Kuttite."

barbarism. He is still the "Unspeakable" as he was in Gladstone's day, his religion and his lack of industry not allowing him to be otherwise. For centuries he has been an armed tax gatherer in a country won by the sword. His Christian subjects, physically inferior, but intellectually and industrially superior, were the life blood and wealth of his empire. By oppression and onerous taxation he has earned their everlasting enmity, suppressing their revolts and crushing their ambitions by wholesale massacre.

The Turks have lived by the sword since the days when they formed the mercenary bodyguards of the Arab Caliphs of Baghdad. The gradual usurpation of the Arab empire, the rise of the Seljuk Turks and their encroachment upon the Byzantine Empire, culminating in its extinction by the Ottoman Turks with the capture of Constantinople in 1453, are glorious pages in Turkish history. But they proved the Turk to be a warrior and little more. The decadence of his empire commenced with the check to his inroads into Europe by the Poles. Thenceforth he has waged war almost unceasingly, while his empire has been gradually dismembered. Three years after the termination of the greatest war history has ever known, finds him fighting his oldest enemies, the Greeks, and after victoriously terminating the campaign by burning Homer's native city of Smyrna, expelling the native Greeks from territory occupied by them a thousand years before the Turk emerged from savagery.\*

It could not be expected that such a nation, given only to the exercise of warlike pursuits and the extortion of money from its subjects, would have much sympathy for hapless prisoners who fell into their hands.

In many cases the Turkish officers were men of superficial culture, possessed of creditable linguistic ability, and often educated abroad. But more often he is half child and half savage and the education a penetrable veneer which serves to cover the vices of the Levantine, from whom the governing classes are principally descended, while the simple hospitality found among the peasants is but one pleasing trait in an otherwise barbaric nature.

No authentic figures are available I believe, but from a

\* It is regrettable to think that the League of Nations approved of this tragedy of deportation from Thrace, knowing well the attendant misery.

careful study of records and knowledge of events, it may be safely assumed that of the fourteen thousand odd British and Indian prisoners captured by the Turks, not more than three thousand survived their captivity.

The hardships of the Ten Thousand of Xenophon, who paved the way for the invasion of Asia by Alexander the Great, would pale before the record of suffering of the prisoners from Mesopotamia on their seven-hundred mile march over much of the same territory, more than two thousand years later.

The remaining prisoners who had been left behind at Kirkuk too ill to walk, arrived at Mosul on January 23rd. No doubt they would have stayed in Kirkuk till they died but for the fact that some arabahs, which had been sent to Kirkuk to transport some Armenian women to Mosul, were utilised—the women probably being claimed elsewhere.

The party consisted of ten British and sixty-five Indian ranks, the majority of the Britishers being N.C.Os. Some had succumbed on the way, but no one knew how many. When they entered the barrack square from the arabahs, several of the party sank exhausted to the ground. Twenty-five were listed for hospital. Helpless with dysentery and starvation they lay huddled on the ground, clinging instinctively to treasured possessions in the shape of ragged blankets and battered water bottles, when some of the Arab guards of the prison approached and kicked them unmercifully to make them rise and walk to hospital! The poor creatures were incapable even of complaint, but three of us who saw the outrage from the balcony shouted and shook our fists at the guard. We called for the *terjuman* and sent him off with a message to the commandant that if he would not provide stretchers for the sick we would gladly carry them. "Carry them then," was the reply!

Accordingly Brodie carried an unconscious sepoy on his back, Treloar assisted two Britishers and I assisted a Britisher and a sepoy. My sepoy was dying, and the Englishman, Private A——, of the Oxfords, felt like a basket framework, so horribly thin had he become with dysentery, while through weakness he had torn away much of his clothing. Yet this living skeleton, with the eternal optimism of the Tommy, was looking forward to a quick recovery in hospital. "I've been prayin' all the way to reach 'ere, sir," he said weakly, "for I knew I'd recover in a decent hospital." I dared not dis-

illusion him, though no sick prisoner had as yet come out of hospital alive. . . .

After dividing what money we had amongst them, we left the delirious wrecks propped against the hospital wall, awaiting the lethargic hospital authorities' pleasure to admit them. Within a week, which scarcely sufficed to rid our clothes of the swarming lice we had picked up from the unfortunate sick, all but one had died.

Among the rest of the party we divided what meat, bread and sour milk we had, letting it down to them by strings from the balcony.

That night we persuaded the *chaoush* to allow two of them to visit our room. To quote again from my diary:—

“I have never seen thinner men. Both were weak and very dirty with long unkempt hair and so little clothing that they had developed heavy colds and were feeling the winter keenly. It was difficult to believe that these men, M—— of the Norfolks and P—— of the Dorsets, belonged to two of the finest British regiments, for they were living skeletons, and M——, whose face was so emaciated that his teeth protruded in a horrible way, looked particularly ghastly. Both men had taken part in practically every engagement, M—— having won a D.C.M. at Shaiba and been recommended for a bar at Ctesiphon.”

We gave them a hot meal and some cigarettes, but M——, who complained of his throat being dry, suddenly fell back in a state of collapse.

After much clamouring on our part, M——, who was obviously suffering from pneumonia and dysentery, was admitted to hospital though P——, whose complaint was dysentery alone and exhaustion, was not considered eligible.

For two weeks we were told by various Turkish officials that M—— was progressing favourably, only to discover later that he had died a day or two after admission. A sepoy who was attending hospital informed us that he had seen M——'s body and that his face was badly cut, which he was told had been caused by a fall, though it is more than probable that the facial injuries had been inflicted by some of the brutal hospital attendants. . . . P—— died some weeks later.

Private A—— of the Dorsets, who had been discharged from hospital but was soon after re-admitted and died, told us, on one of the occasions when some of the prisoners had been

allowed to sit in the sun below our cells to "louse" themselves, that the treatment in the hospital was brutal and inhuman. Private A——, of the Oxfords, the cheerful skeleton that I had taken to hospital, had become despondent and died, as had three or four other Britishers, after the Arab wardsmen had cuffed them over the heads and spat on them because through weakness they had soiled their beds. . . .

"One ward is not so bad," said our informant, "and I was lucky enough to be in the better one. I shared the bed with a very filthy Russian and we had a constant battle for the bedclothes, but I considered myself well-off not being on the floor like many others. In the other ward the wardsmen fed the patients according to how much money they possessed, so that the penniless were starved and ill-treated, while their food was given to others who could afford to pay."

We heard similar reports from sepoys who went as out-patients to the hospital, and their story was further corroborated by the fate of one of the sepoys of the Consular Guard. For some weeks Haziri Singh had sent money to the hospital for this sepoy, but one week having none to send he was soon informed that the patient was dead. We were to learn later that this is a common trick of the Turk. . . . Poor A—— could not have been placed in the ward that was "not so bad" on his re-admission, for we never saw him again.

We wrote strongly-worded letters to the Commandant regarding the hospital treatment, but in response were told that if we became too interested we would be sent where there were no other prisoners, which sinister reply we could interpret as we pleased.

Doubtless the Turkish doctors were not wilfully cruel and prisoners were naturally a secondary consideration, but the hospital was deplorably understaffed and the wardsmen chosen from conscripted semi-savage Arabs, who had bribed their way out of the fighting line. . . . Yet what more helpless and pitiable conditions can be imagined than sick men who had lain down their arms, suffering continued indignity, cruelty and hardship where a little kindness or suitable food would have saved them. Death was welcome to many.

I do not wish to dwell on the suffering of sick prisoners unduly, but as so little seems to be known on the subject it is

only justice to the memory of the dead that some facts of what they suffered should be recorded.

Private R——, a Territorial attached to the Norfolks, and Private F—— of the Oxfords, were smuggled to our cell one night to be fed. They were of course very ragged and dirty and F—— had no trousers. Having bought a pair of trousers from a tailor who visited the prison, as my cotton breeches were thin and shabby, I was able to give them to him, while Goad gave an extra pair of boots to R——. Their spirits were at a low ebb, R——, having been heavily belaboured with a stick by the guard the previous day because he had picked up some cigarettes I had thrown from the balcony. They were both suffering from dysentery and corroborated what we had been told by others. They were taken en masse at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. for a sanitary parade and no matter how urgent was nature's call during the day or night they were not allowed out of their cells and were beaten and struck if they could not control themselves. We learned that the guard had an effective method of taking possession of any articles of prisoners' clothing that they coveted. Sometimes a starving wretch would be tempted to sell his puttees or boots for a few piastres to buy food, hunger and sickness making him reckless of the future. But when the possessor of a coveted article would not readily sell it the guard resorted to a simple but nevertheless effective method. . . . The prisoner was kept in his cell during the sanitary parades until he complied with the wishes of the guard.

Both R—— and F—— died on the subsequent march from Mosul to Ras-el-Ain, R——'s fate being unknown and F—— losing his reason through his ill-treatment.

I find the following entry in my diary typical of the jottings of that time:—

“Feb. 8rd, 1916. A sepoy who attended hospital daily with fever and dysentery and was not granted admission died to-day in his cell, and a Pathan sepoy told us that he had seen the bodies of four Hindoo sepoys lying outside the hospital in the rain. As far as we can gather eighteen prisoners died between 1st and 24th January, though as the Turks will not give us the names there may have been more. These do not include any of those already mentioned. . . . A hospital assistant now visits our prison and attends in a farcical way to the sick. When any medicine is prescribed it seldom arrives within a week,

when it is often found that the patient has died. Lieut. Flynn, who as well as Capt. Brodie, has been stretched out for a week or two in our cell with jaundice, attended the assistant to-day to have a large sore on his leg dressed. After being a considerable time away he returned swearing furiously and exhibited a second-hand bandage on which we counted over thirty lice."

The cells we occupied measured twelve feet square, five of our number in one and four in the other, while as already mentioned, numerous guards who slept on sheepskins on the floor, occupied the other rooms.

Some idea of the general squalor of our quarters may be gathered from this excerpt from "In Kut and Captivity" by Major Sandes, who with other prisoners from Kut-el-Amarah stayed in Mosul some months after our departure, when conditions had considerably improved by the removal of Ibrahim Gunhi Bey. "The barracks were very dirty and the sanitary arrangements were incredibly filthy and quite beyond my power or inclination to describe. How any human beings could live for long in this building without an outbreak of some foul disease is past comprehension."

Our outer window, which was barred and devoid of glass, overlooked the Court of Justice (?), where numbers of Armenian women, reduced to beggary and worse, pleaded for alms in the courtyard. The doorways of this inquisition were hung with leather flaps adorned with innumerable stars and crescents, these substitutes for doors being a survival of the days when all Turks lived in tents. On court days we derived a certain amount of amusement and satisfaction in ourselves awarding sentences according to looks on the doleful delinquents that disappeared one after another behind the curtains.

Various foods attractive to flies, similar to what Jonah probably sold when sitting "in the shadow of his booth" near the same spot, were retailed in the courtyard, and from our tiny aperture we could see exemplified how retribution comes swiftly to the evil-doer by admiring the precocity of small boys and dogs who stole from the stallholders while they were busy giving short weight to their customers.

Close to the walls of the court swirled the muddy waters of the Tigris and on its farther bank, about a mile from the water's edge, were the snow-powdered mounds that once were Ninevah.



Fete days for us were those occasions about once a fortnight when we were allowed the luxury of a Turkish bath. Proceeding under escort through the ill-made crowded streets of this almost exclusively Arab city, we could forget for a time that we were prisoners in the steaming atmosphere and sense of comfort and cleanliness within the domed vaults of the *hammam*, the half hour's repose that followed our scrub being spent swathed in towels and blankets in the garish drying room with various other animated mummies.

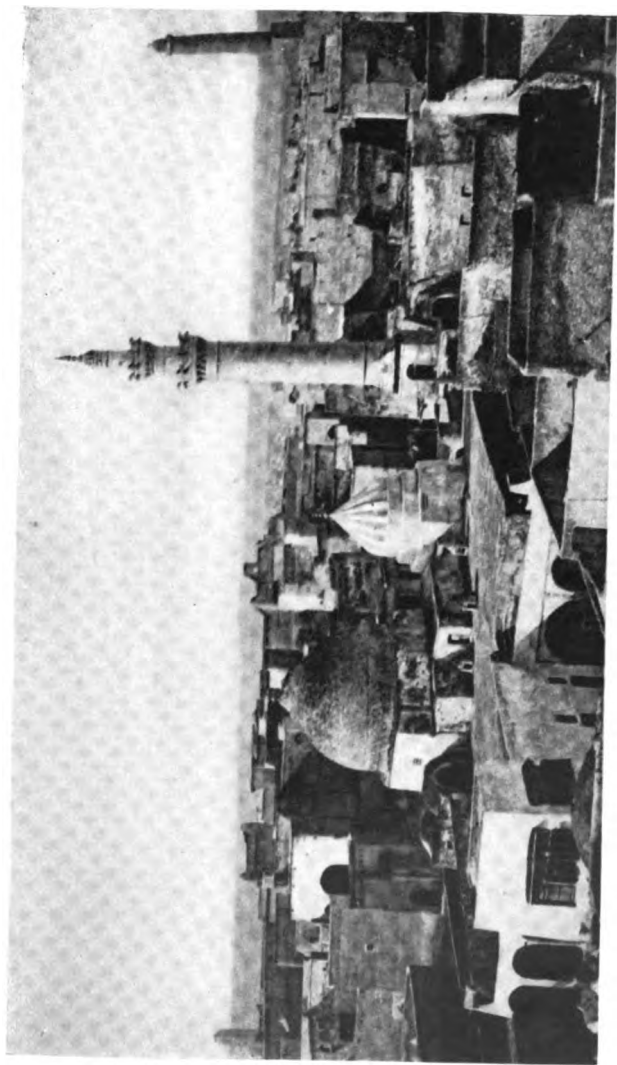
Once we prevailed upon the *chaoush* to allow us to cross the river. The Tigris is about half a mile wide at this point and spanned by a bridge which is part brick and part boat, and connects dead Ninevah with its surviving suburb of Mosul.

A cluster of miserable Arab huts on the side of the mounds belie the buried city's greatness. Jonah's prophecy has been eloquently fulfilled. . . . The tomb of that worthy, whose submarine exploits in the Mediterranean and the Tigris are recorded in the book of the Moslems as well as our own, is in the mosque of the little village of Nebba Yunis (Tomb of Jonah) close by. Across the bridge strings of donkeys and camels laden with brushwood were wending their way. At the water's edge on the Mosul bank, hundreds of Arab women in many coloured costumes were washing clothes, pounding the wet fabric on flat stones with paddles like huge butter pats, with the rhythm of galloping horses. . . . Suddenly the sun dropped behind the barbaric outline of Mosul, looking fortlike and forbidding with the sullen waters beneath its grey walls. As the *muezzins* from the minaret tops called the faithful to prayer we were roused by the "yillah yillah" of our guards.

Mosul under any government other than that of the Turk should undoubtedly flourish, being on the caravan route between Persia and Palestine and conveniently situated for trade by water with India, with which country it had carried on a considerable business in horses before the war.

Under the British mandate it cannot fail to prosper.

It lies almost on the border of Kurdistan and the Kurds, an Aryan race whom anthologists suppose to be descended from the Medes, can be seen swaggering about the bazaars and streets of the city. Robbers and outlaws since the days of Xenophon, when as the Carducci they harrassed the jaded Ten Thousand



MOSUL.



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in their march to the Black Sea, each of these ruffians carries a regular armoury of pistols and daggers stuck in the voluminous folds of his capacious cummerbund. Marco Polo the Venetian, who visited Mosul in the twelfth century during his peregrinations, faithfully describes them as "an unprincipled people whose occupation is to rob the merchants."

As soldiers the Turks despised them, though it is only since the war that they have subdued them, and then only after hanging over thirty of their leaders. "There was only one good Kurd," a Turkish officer told me, "and that was Saladin," for it is a fact that the doughty opponent of Richard Cœur de Lion belonged to this robber race.

During excursions to the bath we endeavoured always, as much as our guard would allow us, to change the paper money that we were paid. This was no easy matter as nobody wanted it and a heavy exchange was extorted whenever we were fortunate enough to find a buyer.

Once we discovered a small bookshop. After much wheedling of our guards we were permitted to enter, after the guard had suitably threatened the Armenian bookseller as a necessary preliminary. Among the dusty and ragged books we found three in our own tongue: Tennyson's *Poems*, Thackeray's "Book of Snobs" and "The Letters of Phillips Brooks." This library of three books, slender as it was, proved a great boon, and their well thumbed pages were read again and again. For after two months in the circumscribed precincts of the prison we had starved for some distraction that would for a moment lift our minds above the sordid present.

In mid-February the prisoners in the dens beneath us were told they were to be sent to Aleppo. Deplorable as their conditions were in Mosul, this announcement caused considerable gloom, for the journey entailed a further march of one hundred and seventy miles to the railhead of Ras-el-Ain. The prospect was a bitter one, for ill-feeding and close confinement had made the majority incapable of marching any great distance. From past experience they knew what would be their fate if sickness or fatigue caused them to drop out by the way.

Two of us were too ill to walk while another still suffered from dysentery, but hopeful of any change and imagining that our presence might be helpful to the men, we applied for leave to go with them. Arabahs were to be provided for us, for

which we were duly thankful and hoped that if we accompanied the column they would be of material use to the men.

A few days before our departure another party of prisoners arrived, consisting of five men of the Black Watch and Seaforth Highlanders and twenty-five Indians. They were in tatters, and having been looted of helmets and boots wore rags round their heads and slippers and rags on their feet. We were forbidden to send them food, but seeing that they were in dire straits we risked lowering them bowls of *leban* and dates. One of the Highlanders who was very thin and wasted with dysentery, when lifted from the back of a donkey was too weak to walk. His comrades seated him gently against the barrack wall, placing a bowl of *leban* in his hand, but he died before it reached his lips.

We succeeded in having the others visit us that night in our cell and fed them with the best we could supply.

From them we first learned that the 6th Division was besieged in Kut-el-Amarah, for they had belonged to the relieving force and had been hurried straight to the front on their arrival in Mesopotamia.

After a heavy day's fighting they had dug in close to the Turkish lines and in different parties when going in the darkness for water had stumbled into the Turkish trenches, one of their number being killed.

We strongly advised them if possible to stop in Mosul to rest for a while, but in spite of the three-hundred-mile march they had just completed, these hardy Scots, who had come fresh from the battlefields of France where they had seen eighteen months of fighting, chose to continue their march. . . . As far as we could ascertain afterwards, all of them died.

An incident occurred shortly before our departure which was typical of the Turks and Arabs in authority at Mosul. The *terjuman chaoush*, a bland, fat-faced Arab with a roving eye and the baggiest trousers in Turkey, had been entrusted to change a five lira note for us—the bulk of our last pay. After a week had elapsed we complained of the delay and were informed that the *chaoush* had never received the money. We had never suspected him of being honest, as in a moment of confidence he had told us that before the war he was in the habit of taking horses to India, where he made a practice of buying counterfeit notes and coins, which he put into circulation in

Mosul on his return. Consequently we knew we were being battered on by thieves; but as we were destitute we persisted in our complaints so vehemently that the corpulent second-in-command visited us to investigate the matter. The *chaoush* insisted, his swivel eye looking the Turk as straight in the face as possible, that never at any time had he received money from us and that we had simply trumped this up against him because we had asked him to help us escape and he had refused.

We fancied the Turk believed him, until a day or two later when much to our delight we saw him in chains clanking dejectedly across the courtyard with the baggy posterior of his pantaloons almost trailing in the dust. No doubt he soon bribed his way to freedom.

The Tishbite Hamid also effected a coup by having an honest Arab (who had recently been detailed to assist him) sent in disgrace to the front, Hamid having complained that his assistant was continually stealing food and clothes from us. The disgraced one visited us before leaving. . . . Hamid showed great foresight in being out when he called, otherwise the visit might have been interesting, as the wrongly convicted Raschid brought a list of current bazaar prices which showed us that Hamid was making several hundreds per cent. on every purchase.

A day or two before leaving, Yeats-Brown was sent for and told that the German Consul wanted to see him. He found that twenty-five pounds had been sent to him through a German friend at Constantinople, so he generously decided to leave fifteen pounds in the custody of the doctor for the purchase of food for sick prisoners.

For some weeks we had been very short of food as the notes that we were paid were so difficult to change and the Commandant had always replied that he was not a money changer when we had asked if he could not do something in the matter.

Yeats-Brown mentioned the exchange difficulties to the Consul (as well as the interruptions of the Commandant would allow), and told him also of the shocking treatment of the rank and file. The German very kindly offered to exercise his prerogative of converting our notes into gold, though he seemed indifferent to the treatment of the men.

At dawn on the 20th February we were ordered to leave for Aleppo. We persisted in breakfasting in spite of the clamour

of Hamid and various members of the guard who with remarkable avidity pounced on our belongings and made a pretence of taking them to the arabahs. Their labours were ill-rewarded for our food and anything else worth looting we carried ourselves.

Eleven Britishers and two hundred and forty Indians formed the men's party, and their chances of surviving appeared small, as none of them were fit enough to march any distance, though many were buoyed up by the thought of a change to anything that could not be worse.

The ragged detachment was more like a parade of sick than a column about to undertake a two-hundred-mile march on starvation rations. Forty donkeys had been provided and some sick and a few sepoy without boots had already mounted and were filing out of the courtyard.

We had refused to pay the six pounds each that the Commandant had demanded for the arabahs, pointing out that Turkish prisoners in British hands did not pay for their transport. We divided what money we could spare among the men and expected the arabahs would be cancelled, but to our surprise they were not.

We drove through the gloomy portals of the prison at the head of the miserable procession, Ibrahim Ghani Bey and his staff, popinjays in top boots and furred fezzes, attending to see us off and to scowl.

Balshazzar-like, I had written an anathema on the head of this wretch on the walls\* of our cell, that the world at large and others who might fall among thieves, should know his iniquities—at least until the cell was re-whitewashed. For as sure as there are beings whose actions have merited the hangman's rope, Ibrahim Ghani Bey deserved priority.

Once beyond the ruined walls of the city we laboured through heavy mud to a little eminence where we could look back at the city of desolation and despair. The minaret tops

\* Our little room in the barracks had some interesting remarks written on its whitewashed walls. One of these ran as follows:—"Five British officers were imprisoned here for periods of from three to six months"; and another in large letters—"Gott strafe der Commandant." Yet another stated that a party of British officers was leaving for Aleppo. It had been written some two months or so previous to our arrival. The names of Captain White and Lieut. Treloar of the Australian Flying Corps (whom we met later at Afion Kara Hissar) figured conspicuously under a drawing of the Australian flag and the motto "Advance Australia". "In Kut and Captivity" by E. W. C. Sandes.

seemed with difficulty to support a leaden sky and ominous black clouds appeared ready to engulf this miserable city. The muddy Tigris swirled on its course as relentlessly as when the mounds of Ninevah and the memory of the glory of Heraclius over the Persian host on the same classic ground were but fleeting reminiscences that in an instant were obliterated by the realisation of the immortality of Nature.

“Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Ninevah and Tyre ! ”



## CHAPTER XI

### ADVENTURES—AND AN ADVENTURER

**O**UR suspicions that the men's party would be separated from us throughout the march were increased when the ragged column, accompanied by the greater part of the guard, was diverted to a different road. At first we fancied that they were to be marched by a shorter route to our destination for the night because they were on foot, but when they did not rejoin us at our halting place we realised the improbability of ever seeing them again. . . . And one suffering Britisher and thirty starving sepoys whom we met three weeks later on the Aleppo train were the sole survivors—with the exception of four or five who followed later from hospital.

The full record of their sufferings, could it be told, would stir the blood of the most hardened. Some of the poor creatures had died of exposure on the frozen ground where they had lain down for the night; others had a lingering and piteous death in atrocious so-called hospitals, where kind attention was unknown. Two went raving mad and met a worse fate, while others, exhausted with fatigue, dropped out from the weary column to die on the wayside with Arabs and jackals for company. The senior N.C.O. of the party, Warrant Officer Sly, one of the few survivors, told me that he had at one time dropped out to die but had had a miraculous deliverance. Being unable to move from one halting place through dysentery and fatigue, he was admitted to a hospital where nursing was unknown but where rest and an iron constitution enabled him to recuperate sufficiently to continue the march with other sick prisoners. A week or two later when crossing the Taurus Mountains fatigue had once more so overtaken him through semi-starvation, exposure and continued marching, that all the blows of the Kurdish guards could not goad him to his place in the column. He dropped out to die, losing consciousness

when the well-shod guard kicked him about the body to assure themselves that he was dead. How long he lay there he did not know, but when consciousness returned he found himself in the hut of some Arab road-menders. Judging by their covetous glances and a dispute that was raging, he slowly realised the situation and that his ragged clothes were the objects of their cupidity. Lying dazed and helpless and wondering in what manner he would be done to death he saw a Turkish officer pass down the road. Fear and hope lent him strength and with an almost superhuman effort he struggled to his feet and *ran*. The Turkish officer proving fortunately to be one of the chivalrous variety, protected Sly and took him to Adana. There, in a hospital supervised by an indefatigable American lady, Miss Davis, who until America's entry into the war did splendid work among prisoners in that town, Sly was nursed back to health. . . . When months later he appeared at our concentration camp, a shadow of his former self and leaning heavily on a stick, we were as surprised as if he had risen from the dead. Sly's experience, though mostly with fatal consequences, was the lot of many an unfortunate prisoner during the march of the Five Hundred of the Retreat as well as of those who followed later from the siege of Kut-el-Amarah.

Our experiences will hardly bear recording beside the sufferings of these unfortunates, though even they were not without incident. And the arabahs undoubtedly saved the lives of three of our party, for Fulton, Atkins and Yeats-Brown were stricken with a fever which made them incapable of walking and caused excruciating facial contortions that lasted long afterwards, while Brodie and Flynn were weak from jaundice, and as already related the stoical Haziri Singh died of typhus soon after our journey to the concentration camp was ended.

Throughout the first day we followed the caravan route along a soft unmetalled track, crossing freshets and water-courses at the fords, for every culvert and bridge was a monument to Turkish inefficiency and neglect, the masonry standing isolated with its approaches washed away. Many dead animals littered the track and polluted the air, while close to the road the gruesome sight of three Turkish corpses, stripped of clothes and partly devoured by jackals, showed us that the Turks were moving their troops by forced marches to the siege of Kut.

We halted that night at an Arab village some miles off the

road where a donkey caravan carrying kerosene was parked. A verminous mud sheep-shelter with one small door and no windows served as our hostelry, and though the cats vied with the rats for precedence in its fetid atmosphere, we preferred its solitude to the gloom and misery of Mosul. Some excited challenging by the sentries, which we thought betokened the arrival of the men's party, was the prelude to the appearance of three mounted officers. They looked in at the door, though so used were we to being gazed at by the curious that we ignored their presence until one of them, a short, thick-set Yousbashi of cavalry, enquired with a pronounced Yankee twang:—"Can I do anything for you boys?" We were astounded to hear English, or rather American, from an obvious Turk, and in reply stared our blank surprise. Followed by his companions he moved into the light of the candle stump around which we sat. "This is Colonel X.," he said, squatting amongst us and indicating a Kaimakam of gendarmerie who carried his arm in a sling. "He's not a bad sort, as Turks go," he added, while the Colonel beamed self-consciously, assured that his praises were being sung. "I'm no — Turk myself," he continued. "I'm a Yank." "A Yank," I repeated with surprise. "I'm really a Venezuelan, though I bin a stodent at Boston University and a cow puncher in Arizona. Here's my ad-dress," he said, producing visiting cards and diplomatically handing them to us by the hand of the Kaimakam. The cards were inscribed

Rafael de Nogales,  
Caracas.

As further proof of his bona fides as a good Samaritan, he produced a small flask of brandy and generously distributed every drop of it amongst us.

"I have heard," drawled this modern D'Artagnan, "you boys have had a rough passage in that gaol at Mosul and as I've bin a prisoner myself I'm going to see that while I travel with you the "dawgone" sheikhs of the villages where we stay get a rustle on in the way of prodoooin food for you." We thanked him warmly, and he was as good as his word.

Before the Turks shook him off some days later we were privileged to hear his most amazing reminiscences. He had sought adventure on four continents, searching for gold in the

Klondyke and oil in the Dutch Indies, and between whites participating in every possible war.

In the chilly half-light of dawn next day we saw Nogales, booted and spurred, marshalling the caravan and the guard. A smart Turkish orderly holding a beautiful dapple grey stallion waited alongside, while Nogales from a small eminence shouted orders, nonchalantly whistling some incongruous "rag" between whites and always dominating the scene. We could not but admire the courage which prompted him to play this lone-handed adventure among such people.

The third of the interesting trio of officers that had joined us was a picturesque youth, regarding whom we could ascertain little, except that he was a person of consequence. And if the possession of a cartload of carpets, camp beds and other travelling paraphernalia, together with a singular uniform, was a sign, he was an important personage indeed.

He wore khaki and putties, but with a fur-edged silken Arab headdress, and rode a milk white mare. Nogales was silent about him, except to hint that he had been employed in secret service work in Afghanistan and Persia. As he spoke neither English nor French, though we were told he spoke half-a-dozen Eastern languages, we were unable to glean much from him in conversation. His irreproachable manners and the deference paid him by the wounded Kaimakam and others of the guard, led us to believe that he was of royal blood, consequently we dubbed him *The Prince*.\*

We were entering Yezidi country and it was wise to make our caravan appear as large as possible. The Yezidi are a race of heathen Arab, reported by Morier and others to be devil worshippers. Certain it is that they were never converted to Mohammedanism, and they have always resented Turkish incursions into their territory, which includes a large stretch of Upper Mesopotamia north-west of Mosul. Several convoys and caravans had recently been attacked by them, for they were ambitious to secure some artillery and had actually attacked the convoy with which Von der Goltz had travelled to Mosul. Nogales had hoped for an encounter and did his best to provoke one. At intervals on the boundless plain were circular mounds which doubtless marked the site of buried

\* From Nogales book, "Four Years Beneath the Crescent", published since these lines were written, I learn that he was a member of the Royal Family of Afghanistan.

villages. A solitary horseman would sometimes be seen motionless as a statue on the summit of a mound, only to disappear as we approached, to re-appear on the next; and all the stratagems of Nogales and the guard could not bring more than one man into view at a time. "We're like hunters in a forest," said the Venezuelan to me. "We see practically nothing while our quarry sees us all the time."

On the highest mound passed during the day stood an ancient castle of roughly quarried sandstone, at the foot of which were many roofless houses, their loopholed walls grass-grown and in ruins, and at a ford some miles away were the remains of a Roman bridge.

At the Venezuelan's invitation we were allowed to visit the castle which was used as a gendarmerie post and flour store for passing troops. "Look at the crosses cut on the walls," whispered Nogales, as we shared some spiced sausage and spring onions he had generously provided. "Some poor devils of Christians have attempted to defend themselves here."

As we continued the journey Nogales seemed prompted by our gratitude and the fellowship of language and faith to unburden some further incidents of his life. He had fought with the Spaniards against America as a boy and was taken prisoner but escaped. Politics and journalism had occupied him in Venezuela and he hoped to see a federation of the States of Colombia and Ecuador with his own country. The Russo-Japanese war found him on the side of the Japs and afterwards the Mexican bandit Villa proved him a useful lieutenant. "Your adventures would make interesting reading," I remarked, as he rode beside our arabah. "Have you ever thought of writing the story of your life?" "I'd have every sheriff in Arizona after me if I did," he laughingly answered. "What induced you to fight for the Turks?" I asked him. "I was educated in Germany," he replied after some hesitation, "and I was in that country on a visit of political importance when war broke out." (As it was well-known that Germany had set covetous eyes on South America, it is probable that our friend was negotiating assistance in some *coup* for this end.) "I offered my services and as I had spent some time in Egypt and learned a little Turkish I was placed on General Von der Goltz' staff and sent to Turkey. But I have had enough of

these —. I've seen more than is good for me." For twenty-five days he had been in charge of the Turkish troops that besieged Van, after the Russians had evacuated that town, leaving the Armenians to their fate. "I saw some sights there that I shall never forget," he said earnestly, "and they know it and that I was the only Christian on their side. . . . I'm going now to Constantinople and then to Germany, but I shall consider myself lucky if I get out of Turkey alive. . . . They've twice attempted to do for me," he added slowly, "but there are two things I never do. . . . I never leave this out of reach," slapping his Mauser pistol meaningly, "and I never employ an interpreter!"

A third maxim no doubt was that he endeavoured always to have the best horse in the party.

A Pagan superstition that the souls of women are reincarnated in dogs still survives in Turkey and for this reason the Turks and Arabs are kind to dogs, rarely taking the life of the worst pariah, which accounts for the towns being infested with all kinds of flea-bitten mongrels. It is unfortunate for the donkey in Turkey, where no S.P.C.A. exists, that no such superstition lightens his load of troubles, for he is most cruelly treated, and during a day of excursions and alarms, when our caravan tried hard to look as impressive as possible, we saw some of the methods employed to hurry these patient little animals along. Most of them were not more than ten hands high, yet they carried seemingly impossible burdens, each supporting two full cases of kerosene, with a bag of fodder and straw lashed on top, covering them from wither to croup and hiding their sadly chafed backs.

Prodding sores and flayed backs with a pointed stick was one method employed which saved physical exertion on the part of the lazy Arab drivers, while another effective method was to rock the load so as to chafe the raw places, which only receive attention from myriads of flies when the pack saddles are removed.

At about five o'clock our day's journey brought us to a camp of mud huts where a battery of artillery and a squadron of cavalry were quartered. As it was raining heavily we imagined we were lucky to find shelter, though we proved it to be even more primitive than our resting place of the previous night.

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The following entry in my diary describes without exaggeration where our caravan had rested.

"The two Subadars and two others of our party slept in the arabahs, while the remaining seven of us slept in a tiny room of the hut. The thick mud walls were only six feet high and there were no windows nor ventilation of any kind. The low door of the room opened into another in which the guard had lit a cow-dung fire, the pungent smoke from which was most unpleasant. Nogales had ridden ahead during the day and had a sheep killed. About 10 p.m. we had some of this with fried rice which was brought to us by an old Armenian, who seemed to be in deadly fear of his life. Sleep was difficult as rats ran over us as our bodies occupied all the floor space, and a greyhound, searching for food, twice awakened me by walking on top of me in order to get at my saddle bags. Lice were even worse than at our last halt and to cap it all a goat wandered in and bleated so piteously and persistently beside Flynn that he went outside to an arabah, which we all would have done but for the heavy rain. We were glad, when about 4 a.m., having slept but little, we were called to prepare for a start before dawn in the rain."

A continuous downpour had converted a desert waste into a wilderness of soft red mud into which the arabah wheels sank deeply. Except for Fulton, who had become too weak with fever to walk, we trudged at intervals beside the arabahs to lessen the horses' loads. An ammunition convoy and some hundreds of ragged soldiers, marching on a front some miles wide, passed in the rain like ships in the night. Many of the men were bootless and their disorderly formation was evidently the result of fatigue and a search for fuel. Miserable prisoners that we were we could not but pity them, miles from any camping place, food for cannon on arrival at their remote destination, or tracked down by merciless Arabs if fatigue overcame them.

Occasional mounds, sometimes marked by a boulder at the head and the foot, showed where others who had gone before had been rudely buried; protruding hands and feet showing that when on the march the Turk simply scratches a little earth over the bodies of his dead, without digging a grave.

The guards bent their heads to the rain that beat unceasingly in their faces, their horses plodding patiently along on a track

that seemed to lead nowhere, while Nogales, bolt upright in the saddle, shrouded in a cloak with a comical tasselled hood, rode on in the van like a cowed Napoleon.

Always it rained and rained, till towards dusk we reached a valley studded with mossy blue-stone boulders, where at the bottom on the banks of a swift flowing river the mud huts of a Turkish camp could be seen. The cheering sight of shelter prompted our arabachis to whip their horses to a race. The vehicle in which I was riding gradually outdistanced the others and the horses getting out of hand swerved off the road and galloped down the rocky sides of the valley. Bumping over huge boulders at a breakneck speed, with the horses slipping and stumbling and the terrified driver grimly hanging on to the reins, it seemed inevitable that the swaying vehicle must quickly capsize or break to pieces. Hearing a smashing of wood and iron beneath me, which I believed to be the wheel breaking, I risked the consequences and jumped out, fortunately without injury. My travelling companion, however, either through discretion or fear of broken bones, sat fast, travelling to the bottom of the declivity, where scared horses and equally scared driver and passenger came to a halt against the uphill side of one of the huts, with no greater damage to the vehicle than broken springs. No Ford could have endured more.

Our next day's journey was expected to terminate at Nisibin, an Assyrian city which in the heyday of Rome and Persia was an outpost that sapped the strength of both empires in their efforts to hold it. We left before dawn and crossed a snow-fed river that had become a rushing torrent overnight. Four or five similar rivers were crossed during the day, a horse in each instance being ridden into the stream to find a ford. Such crossings required considerable skill on the part of the arabachis and much wear and tear on the arabahs, for in places the banks were high and steep. Horses would be whipped down the banks to the water, where the arabahs were jerked with a crash upon the boulders hidden in the river bed. In one of these leaps in the dark our patchwork arabah suffered further damage, for so steep was the bank that the vehicle jumped from the bank into the water, landing so heavily on its wheels that the springs were yet further broken and the fore carriage bent until it almost touched the back wheels. More string and wire



was used for the broken parts and we continued on our way.

Prettily situated villages dotted the plain and the foothills of distant mountains and appeared peaceful and inviting among their trees. A chill wind numbed us, so that nips of Worcestershire sauce and water from Nogales, which that worthy drank as a substitute for whisky, were most welcome. "You couldn't find a live man in any one of those villages," he declared. "They were mostly Armenians and the Turks cleaned them up. It is said that some Turks were poisoned there, though of course we don't know anything at all about that. . . . Anyhow, they're finished now and their women driven off and you'll be wise not to mention Armenians in Nisibin, which, *Inshallah*, we should reach to-night."

But we did not reach Nisibin that night, thanks to the heavy mud. And darkness setting in and thick black clouds obscuring the stars, three of our arabahs lost their way. Vivid lightning and peal upon peal of thunder preceded torrential rain that beat through the rotten hoods of our vehicles, while our superstitious drivers, abjectly frightened and hopelessly lost, wailed like children. After miles of seemingly aimless wandering and much shouting on the part of our guards, the storm suddenly ceased and the distant barking of dogs was heard. Soon afterwards we were slipping and floundering knee-deep through the squelching filth of an Arab village. Much to our joy we found Nogales had preceded us and had succeeded in making old Abdy-ben-Hamid the Sheikh "get a rustle on" with a vengeance. Sodden clothes and chilled limbs were quickly forgotten before a fire that blazed in the centre of the Sheikh's reception hut, while the sight of spitted chickens roasting in the flames, besides quantities of sour milk and eggs, gladdened our hearts. "You boys will excuse me now," said Nogales, "and Santa Claus here," indicating the patriarchal sheikh, "will entertain you till I return. I have an appointment with a lady in this city."

And Santa Claus, in Druidical robe and red sash, in repayment for a little tea and sugar that we possessed, fed us like boys at a treat. We learned too, though we seldom had the opportunity of practising it while in Turkey, the Arab method of coffee-making. The roasted beans are crushed with a crude pestle and mortar and placed with sufficient water in a small,

long-handled copper ladle. The ladle is held in the fire until it boils, but only when the inky liquid is on the point of boiling over is it removed from the flame until the bubbling has subsided. This process is repeated again and again, until the necessary strength and flavour is obtained, which it must be confessed is greatly minimised by the muddiness of the coffee grounds.

Nisibin nowadays would not be likely to arouse the cupidity of nations, though doubtless before it fell beneath the blight of Ottoman rule it merited considerable attention. Successive sieges by Romans and Persians during their seven centuries of rivalry have reduced it to insignificance, and as we rattled over the dilapidated bridge to the town it was difficult to conjure up the recorded energies of the Persian King Sapor, who converted the river that skirts it into a lake on which he launched fleets of ships and floating batteries of archers, so that he might the better assail its walls. There are many tumbledown ruins in its vicinity and, in places in the bazaar, carved Byzantine pillars unearthed from some ruin support rust-eaten verandahs.

We were driven through the town to a pretentious-looking building with well finished mud walls, whose upper storey was occupied by the Commandant of the town and his staff. Seeing a raised dais that I judged would be less accessible to nocturnal crawlers I spread my ragged mattress upon its polished top, to discover soon afterwards by various evidences of spoliation that I had made my bed upon the altar of a pillaged Christian church.

Tatters of red cloth hung from the beams of the ceiling, showing where some decorative cloth designed to cover its bareness had been stripped off. Gaping holes in the wall suggested where crucifixes and candelabra had been torn down, and a broken marble font in a courtyard below gave further evidence of the thoroughness of the wreckers. Large bundles of bedding occupied the further end of the room, spoil to the spoilers. . . . And remembering the words of Nogales we thought it wiser not to mention the word Armenian, though it was easy to conjecture what had happened and to ponder on the tragedy of it.

The Prince, the wounded Kaimakam and Nogales visited us that night, the first-named bringing with him by way of entertainment some rare Turkish stamps and numerous auto-

graphed photographs of his deity, Enver Pasha. In his opinion, Enver, the son of the Sultan's coachman and the greatest desperado of the century, who, by unscrupulous ambition coupled with unshakeable determination and courage, had risen from obscurity to be the veritable ruler of Turkey, was greater than Napoleon—greater, averred the Prince, because he would be ultimately victorious! . . .

We were to have left at dawn next morning. Nogales, earliest astir, left first with his trusty henchman . . . to be seen by us no more. For the Turks in their ignorance of English did not trust him and no doubt feared that his association with us might lead to attempts at escape.

Our stay at Nisibin was continued for two days more in order that he should be well ahead of us. Though he helped us in the matter of bettering our conditions, there were no grounds for the suspicion that he would have aided us in escaping. This I learned from him one day when I hinted at such a possibility, and was told to let it be known that he would shoot without hesitation anyone who attempted to escape.

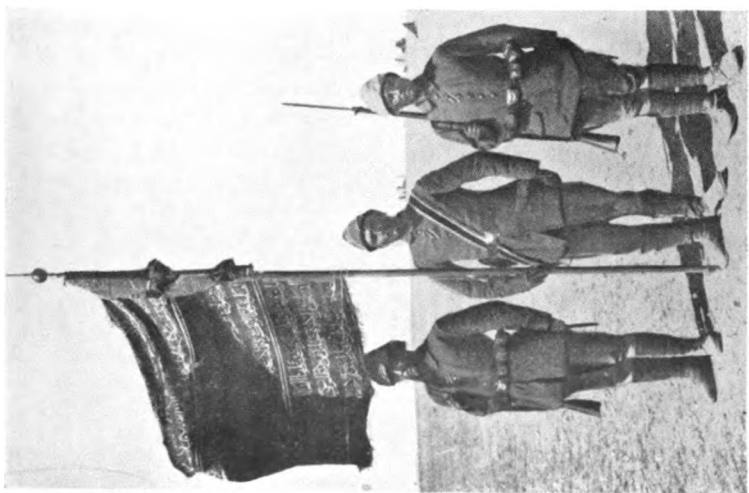
Filibuster, adventurer or soldier of fortune, Rafael de Nogales was a true friend to us in distress, and without doubt a doughty adversary. The measure of courage and self-reliance required in his lone-handed adventure may be gauged when it is remembered that his faith alone was sufficient to antagonise those with whom he worked. Should these lines reach his eyes, I trust he will read therein the sincerity of my thanks and very real appreciation of his services rendered to those in bondage. . . . I heard of him a year or so later, on the arrival in our camp of a prisoner from Palestine.\*

The British communications in Palestine had been raided on more than one occasion by enemy cavalry and I was not surprised to learn that the leader of these daring exploits was Nogales. At a wayside station near Jerusalem the new prisoner heard a commotion that suggested a menagerie let loose and on looking out of the train saw a Turkish *Colonel* attempting to climb on the back of a camel in most unorthodox fashion. The driver of the animal appeared anything but pleased, while the beast itself emitted vociferous protests against being mounted via its tail. But the strength and agility of the performer pre-

\* Lieut. C. H. Vautin, Australian Flying Corps.



RAFAEL DE NOGALES.



REGIMENTAL COLOURS OF TURKISH INFANTRY  
IN MESOPOTAMIA.





vailed, much to the prisoner's amusement. His laughter brought the *Colonel* in his direction. "I met some of your boys in Mesopotamia," he said. "Is that where you learned that trick?" he was asked. "No, I was simply doing it for a wager," he laughingly confessed. Later he admitted his association with the cavalry raids, also that the Turks were rather worried about him as he had recently *promoted himself Colonel*.

(Rafael de Nogales book, "Four Years beneath the Crescent," published since the above lines were written, is both surprising and disappointing to me. Pleasantly surprising without doubt to learn that he survived the rigours of war and the plottings of his enemies among the Turks. Surprising also in its revelations. He relates (page 26) "that an Aide to the Military Commander at the Mosul fort" (the callous Ibrahim Ghani Bey) "whispered" as Nogales left Mosul "that a certain group of English officers . . . had set out for Aleppo that morning but that . . . they would never reach their destination, as there was a squadron of Circassian volunteers posted on the road with directions to see that they don't arrive." He relates how he resolved to prevent this crime at all cost. He overtook the men's column, "a party of two or three hundred Hindustan soldiers and British non-commissioned officers, guarded by a horde of gendarmes mounted on asses. . . Many of the prisoners were suffering from anæmia, typhus, pernicious fevers and endemic agues and could barely drag themselves along on staves and crutches. . . Eighty per cent. of them perished from starvation and disease on the journey of eighteen days across the desert . . . the others succumbed a few weeks later in the mountains of the Taurus and the Amanus in consequence of malignant fevers and of privations." He further records how "after nightfall we" (the Prince and himself) "finally came up with the English officers and their escort encamped in a wretched little hamlet . . . while the guard looked on with ironical and hate-laden glances, which revealed to me clearly enough the imminent peril of the prisoners." He noticed that night in the company of the officer of gendarmerie who commanded the guard "a Circassian volunteer officer of dubious aspect in whom I immediately recognised an individual who had joined us on the road that morning. . . I suspected immediately that he was the leader of the Circassian guerillas about whom the Aide at

Mosul had spoken; so after supper I called him on one side and said significantly: 'They know all about this in the German consulate. The Consul has your names, so that in case the English officers are assassinated on the road he will denounce you all and have you severely punished; because if any such crime were committed, the British Government would certainly hold him also responsible.' He later taxed the guard commander with the Circassian's disappearance, but the Turk professed not to have seen the man. "From that time forward," writes Nogales, "I never lost an opportunity of giving that histrionic gentleman to understand that so long as I accompanied them these officers were not to be molested or insulted."

(It is probable that our lives were plotted against. We had incurred the bitter enmity of the Mosul Commandant and had been threatened by him because we had told him what we thought of his inhuman methods, and we found on arrival at Aleppo that we were totally unexpected. Nogales is to be commended for the difficult part he played in protecting us, and it is fortunate for us that our departure coincided with his, though it is interesting to note that he was beholden to a member of our party (page 408 of his book) to enable him to eventually leave Turkey after the armistice.

(Certainly Nogales took pains to get us food "by fair means or foul" as he admits himself and thus made himself unpopular. "To over-precise minds 'foul means' may seem the proper term. . . But seeing the unhappy straits of these brave soldiers and gentlemen in the hands of scoundrels I waived the technicalities with a contented conscience in obedience to an older law."

(That he had been well apprised by the German Consul of the conditions at Mosul and that he chivalrously made up his mind in advance to help us is clear. He writes: "Upon our return to the city (Mosul) we (Count Holstein and himself) met a group of English officers, prisoners, accompanied by a strong escort, on the great bridge across the Tigris. It was painful to see these gentlemen . . . reduced to the state in which we found them. They were lodged in a filthy barracks, and it may be they suffered from hunger, while we ourselves were swimming in abundance, since the Consulate was a miniature palace. . . When I saw those officers who endured their misfortune with so much dignity, I experienced that sentiment of universal brother-

hood which every true soldier feels for a comrade, even though an adversary, in the clutch of adversity," &c.

(His book is disappointing to me because it reveals traits in an otherwise chivalrous and courageous nature. That he could remain in the Turkish service after witnessing the fiendish massacres and the "bacchanal of barbarity" towards the Armenians, which he so graphically describes in the chapter "The Bloody Road to Van", and then to assist so energetically at the siege of Van in their further extermination, when his sympathies were so strongly with the besieged, is incomprehensible. Likewise why he did not summarily deal with the Arabs, "the human hyenas and vampires", whom he describes mutilating and killing British wounded after the second battle of Gaza, is also inexplicable, except that in a character so cosmopolitan and innured to cruelty the best attributes could not survive.)

A day's journey over a plain of frozen mud brought us to the Arab village of Darkuk, situated at the foot of a mountain whose summit was circled by the ancient city of Mardin, whose ramparts centuries before had successfully resisted even the sanguinary hordes of Tamerlane. The country in this vicinity was fertile, and in consequence Arab villages were numerous. We called at one of the largest of these, where our Kaimakam negotiated for the purchase of a beautiful Arab colt, that was proudly paraded outside the walls before an admiring audience. The Arab women of these parts made the scene a picturesque one, wearing as they do dresses of vivid colouring, such as one *imagines* are worn in the East, and not the drab bundle-of-bedding gowns of reality. Handsome women and attractive children, barefoot, but wearing necklets and anklets of amber and silver, harem skirts in many shades, and bizarre head swathings of orange and red, proudly watched the horsemanship of their men and the curvetting of the shy winner of future Arab Derbys. But the Kaimakam's affluence was not equal to their demands so we went our way.

We slept that night in comfort with a minimum of unwelcome attention in a room of a sheikh's house, which actually boasted what I had not seen elsewhere in Arab buildings—two apertures for ventilation.

Mardin, in the days of Marco Polo, was noted for its manu-



facture of flax and cotton, as was Mosul for muslin, and was of considerable commercial importance, being situated on the border of Kurdistan. Nowadays it is occupied by a few Kurds, Chaldeans, and a sprinkling of Armenians, to whom with its superfluous dwellings the housing problem can never have presented itself. Its brown belt of houses girdling a snow-covered solitary peak gave it the appearance of some forgotten city.

The morning of that day we reached Tel Armen, a mainly Armenian town, close to the mounds that are supposed to cover Tigranocerta, the one time famous Armenian capital. A large domed ruin and a tall brick tower testified to former greatness. A battalion of Turkish troops was billeted in the battered houses and only a few women and children of the Christian population remained, the male Armenians being conspicuously absent. There were many dead cattle and horses in the streets and the ruined houses appeared to have been heavily bombarded. While our horses were being watered we stamped about for warmth, and climbing to a little rise found thirty-six newly-made graves which spoke eloquently of what had become of the Armenian men. A little girl who had been watching us from a side street crossed herself and looked pleadingly towards us. It was not in our power to help though we were horrified at the Turk's handiwork, learning later that these massacres had been simultaneous and to order throughout the entire country. We were closely watched but I was determined to show the child and her relatives in some way that as fellow Christians they at least had our sympathy, so rolling a cigarette and taking out some matches I placed a Medjidieh in the match box and threw it away in her direction. The smiles of gratitude and appreciation from the child when she picked it up and the beams of satisfaction from her relatives were well worth the risk and expense.\*

\* Both Sandes in "In Kut and Captivity" and de Nogales have something to say of Tel Armen, when passing through three months later and three months before respectively.

Sandes writes:—"Telorji, or Teleman . . . apparently also known as Kotchissar . . . is a place of considerable interest. The village is of no importance, but adjoining it lies a remarkable collection of ruins, seemingly of some Christian settlement or monastery. The most conspicuous ruin is that of a great stone church or abbey of the basilica type, with a dome over the nave and the openings heavily ornamented. Within were quotations from the Koran, indicating that it had been converted into a Mohammedan temple. . . . Grouped about the church were other ruins and conspicuous for miles around stood a ruined campanile, perhaps 100 feet in height. High up the campanile was a loophole around which the wall was pitted with recent bullet holes. . . . Next day we halted for a time near a well where several fellows had a good drink. Afterwards they found to their disgust that other wells close at hand contained the remains of massacred Armenians."

De Nogales records:—"The kasaba of Tel Armen . . . had among other points of interest the ruins of an ancient Christian temple. . . . Three or four blocks further to the west a solitary square tower constructed of blocks of black basalt rose amid a chaos of rubbish and tumble-down buta. Among the dark mass of ruins two kiosks of marble or limestone gleamed like white

A night's rest in a cowshed of the Arab village of Aye'sha brought us to the final stage of our caravaning. The cowshed, for quantity and variety of filth within its loop-holed walls, was superior to any we had seen. But in it, though food was lacking, we were blessed with plenty of room, which was a comfort to the sick members of our party, and "walls however rough keep winter winds away."

Some hours of travel next day found us in sight of the elevated tanks of the railhead—the hand of man in the wilderness. A brigade of infantry, bearing cumbrous packs and driving before them flocks of sheep and goats, had just detrained, and passed us stoically, their faces set to a three-hundred-mile march to Diabekr. For the sake of our beleaguered comrades in Kut-el-Amarah we wished them the luck of the army of Sennacherib.

The second-class compartment of the German-built Constantinople to Baghdad (?) railway appeared to us, after the discomfort of arabah travelling, to be the acme of comfort, and we bounced ourselves up and down upon the upholstered seats like so many children.

Trains seldom run in Turkey by night, so during the twelve hours' wait that preceded our departure we were able to purchase food and see a little of the terminus town of Ras-el-Ain.

Like Nisibin, Ras-el-Ain was a Roman outpost for many years against the Parthian and Persian hordes, a ruined Roman fort on its outskirts evincing the far-flung power of that great empire. Ras-el-Ain at the time of our visit was the limit reached by Germany in her ambitious short-cut-to-India railway, though hundreds of under-fed British and Indian prisoners were doomed later to work in extending its mileage.

A large camp of Armenians herded together after the general round-up from their homes, and waiting to be sent on marches that had always the same ending, was pitched on the outskirts of the town. We heard later when at Afion Kara Hissar that a general slaughter of the unfortunates took place early in 1918.

swans. I was attracted to them not only by the inscriptions but by a certain aroma with which I was already familiar. Setting myself to find whence it emanated, I recoiled in horror from a couple of wells or cisterns filled with Christian corpses in an advanced state of putrefaction. A little farther on I came upon another subterranean receptacle which, to judge from its insupportable stench, must have been likewise replete with carrion. As if that were not enough, on every hand were unburied corpses and corpses barely covered with heaps of stone from which emerged here and there a bloody tress or an arm or leg gnawed by hyenas. . . I seem to hear at my ear, vibrating like a hyena's laughter, the cynical words of the Grand Vizier, Talaat Pasha, 'The massacres? Oh, well! they merely amuse me.'"

Much whistling and shouting at daybreak dispelled an unwonted sense of comfort and we rubbed our eyes to a vista of treeless desert as we fussed and jolted on our way to Aleppo.

The ambitious Baghdad railway is well built, the track being laid on steel sleepers which make it independent of timber in an almost timberless country. Culverts and embankments were soundly constructed and streams diverted from their course with a thoroughness that is typically German. But a sameness about the railway stations exemplified the mechanical Prussian; for station after station was so monotonously alike and appeared so glaringly incongruous on the face of nature, that they might have been so many cubes of concrete distributed mathematically on a given line.

The locomotives were large and powerful but owing to the scarcity of coal, wood fuel, which had often to be carried great distances, was used. Many of the trucks bore Belgian and Russian markings, being captured rolling stock sent to Asia Minor from Germany.

Our train was so long and cumbrous and its speed at times so limited that sportingly disposed Arabs shouted challenges to our engine crew to race and galloped beside us over the yellow plains, rifles in air and loose robes flying in the wind.

We noticed a singular architecture, if any exists in Arab dwellings, in the huts in this region. For whereas all that we had seen until then were of more or less rectangular design, in that part of Mesopotamia which borders on northern Syria they are circular, resembling mud wigwams. This shape is evidently consequent upon the scarcity of timber, and from a distance the villages look like enormous clustering colonies of bees in conical hives.

By sunset we had reached the Euphrates, broad and majestic, and older than history, spanned by a magnificent bridge of eleven bow-string girders, a splendid tribute to German engineering skill.

At the riverside station of Djerablous, humanity's handiwork, both ancient and modern, was visible in the mounds and semi-revealed ruins of ancient Carchemish, the Babylon of the great Hittite empire, side by side with artillery and gun ammunition being loaded on rafts for transport to the Mesopotamian front.

Something prompted our engine crew to keep the train

moving after dark and about midnight we drew into the imposing junction of Aleppo.

The Kaimakam and the Prince had spoken of an Hotel Victoria at Aleppo, which, by their oft-repeated *chok eyi* in its favour, appeared to be a passable Turkish equivalent of a Ritz or Waldorf Astoria. As they had also intimated that we were to stay there, we were eagerly anticipating the luxury of regular meals and a bed.

Dumping our miscellaneous collection of bundles into some waiting arabahs we were driven off through the unlit streets to a destination named by our custodian, while an arabah took Fulton to hospital. The arabah that preceded us became bogged in one of the quagmires of the city streets, and shortly afterwards the one in which I rode with Lieut. Treloar stuck fast too, and all the beating of the horses and the wailing of the youthful arabachi and his assistant could not extricate us.

As the night was dark we saw possibilities of escape. Our guards were either attached to arabahs further ahead or attending the bogged one behind and we believed that in the inky darkness we might dash away unobserved except for the arabachis, to whom we would give a quietus, if necessary. Our chances certainly would have been small. We had neither money nor food and were almost entirely ignorant of the language. The topography of the city was unknown to us and we were both extremely fatigued. Nevertheless, there were possibilities. We were still debating the situation between spasmodic floggings of the horses by the driver when the matter was decided for us by the arrival of the Prince with half-a-dozen of our guard. The arabah was dragged out of the mire, only to stick fast in another bog a few yards further on. Gathering up our ragged bundles, we were marched to where the rest of our party was waiting, after having abandoned their vehicles under similar circumstances. Wearily we dragged ourselves along a steeply sloping street behind the guard, buoying ourselves up with the thought of the comforts of the Hotel Victoria. Eventually we arrived outside a forbidding looking building without lights, that sported a few guns at a doorway which was ominously reminiscent of our last "hotel" at Mosul. . . We entered and were lost.

Our hotel was the famous barracks built by the Egyptian invader Ibrahim Pasha, consisting of an immense pile of stone

buildings capable of quartering many thousands of troops. We were led through a doorway screened by a painted leather curtain into a tiny room, where a Bimbashi as old as Methusaleh dozed in its thick atmosphere over a small brazier. We were in the presence of the father of all "Dug-Outs." Rubbing his eyes several times as if to reassure himself that he was not dreaming, with a few grunts at the Kaimakam, he sleepily made some entries in a large book with a pointed stick and croaked an order to the sentries. The Kaimakam and the Prince disappeared and we were joined by Methusaleh's grandfather. Returning blink for blink with the old men, too fatigued and depressed even to swear, we dropped off to sleep in huddled attitudes on the floor. Some hours later we were roused with a loud "yilla" from the guard and escorted to a room to sleep, along dark rambling passages, where sentries stood like statues in recesses in the wall.

We were thankful to find, by the light of matches, that the floor was a wooden one, though it possessed more rat holes to the square foot than anything we had yet seen, while the multitudinous vermin which swarmed on its uncleanly surface attacked us in massed battalions. And their bites seemed a penance for not having escaped when the opportunity offered.

## CHAPTER XII

### ALEPPO—AND ONWARDS

**A**LEPPO'S function in the world has always been commercial rather than military, though it has suffered greatly from the vicissitudes of war. As the junction of the Palestine railway and the Constantinople-Baghdad line, it was of considerable importance during the Great War. For this reason also it was the ultimate objective of the British force in Palestine, as its capture meant the isolation of the Mesopotamian front.

It has a history as long as almost any living city. Abraham is alleged to have dwelt there. In Grecian days that followed the invasion of Alexander it was known as Berœa. Romans and Persians successively ruled it. The Caliph Omar wrested it from the enervated hands of the Byzantine rulers. The Crusaders of the First Crusade captured it from the Saracens and Tamerlane in his march of slaughter left one of his pyramids of heads there to mark his disfavour at the resistance offered him and the impregnability of the citadel, which was only surrendered by treachery.

We felt like pocket Tamerlanes towards the inquisitive crowd who peered at us, when sleep could no longer resist the onslaughts of the swarming vermin that had been left as a legacy by generations of soldiers and criminals. Numbers of fezzed heads belonging to various curious and baggy-trousered civilians and soldiers gazed at us in tiers from the doorway. "Oh! for a shot gun," groaned Atkins, whose attitude towards Turks and Arabs was at all times homicidal. Undismayed by our glares some of these ventured inside. Possibly we were the first Britishers they had seen and should have excused their conduct, but strangely enough, hard boards, bug bites, and empty stomachs are not conducive to a philosophical appreciation of one's fellow men, especially one's enemies.

An officer accompanied by satellites pushed brusquely

through the crowd. Ignoring his blandishments we asked if we could purchase food, whereupon a soldier with ten piastres from each of us was despatched and quickly returned with some ringed biscuits. We then asked to speak to the Commandant. A tall, good-looking *kaimakam* entering, Goad and Reilly, as the seniors of our party, acted as a deputation to request that we should no longer be treated as criminals.

The Turk explained that he had not the slightest idea why we had been sent to Aleppo, moreover he had not been informed of our coming. To clear up the situation he would wire Army Headquarters to know where we should be sent; meantime he would see that we were placed in better quarters.

Our lack of faith in the promises of the Turk made us doubly surprised when the same day, with the usual *yillahs* from the guard and much waving of their arms as if driving sheep, we realised that we were expected to move on—to better quarters we devoutly hoped.

To our delight the arabahs pulled up at a pretentious sandstone building labelled Hotel American, on entering which we were introduced to a dining-room possessing tables with *tablecloths* and bedrooms containing *bedclothes and beds*. It was the nearest approach to civilisation we had seen for months. Enquiry regarding the tariff from the Armenian-turned-Turk proprietor gave us cause for perturbation for we found his charges were nearly twice the amount per day that the Turks in their generosity saw fit to allow us. Seeing little danger of being sued as debtors we sat down cheerfully to the largest meal that could be served.

The *kaimakam* visited us next day and as we still loomed large in the eyes of Mine Host owing to suspected affluence, we were entertained to coffee in the best room of the hotel. The room was well furnished in Oriental style with Turkish rugs on walls and floor and panoramic carpet friezes of Arabs in conflict. Sinking deep into divans upholstered in crimson silk we drank coffee, smoked the *kaimakam's* cigarettes and confessed inability to pay. The obsequiousness of our host vanished like desert snow, but he received definite instructions from the *kaimakam*, who was both courteous and kindly, that we were to be charged not more than nineteen piastres per day, which allowed us a shilling a day for soap, cigarettes and other luxuries.

It had not been our good fortune to meet many generous Turks, and we were beginning to think that the saying that appertains to Arabs "that the only good ones are dead ones" was equally applicable to the Turks. The *Kaimakam* Commandant of Aleppo was certainly an exception. Like many European Turks he was as fair as the average Englishman, and spoke French fluently. He told us that he was leaving for another command but that we would remain at the hotel until orders came regarding our transfer, and he expressed the hope that we might be well treated after his departure.

We found that the reduction in tariff meant a more than *pro rata* reduction in food. The two microscopic meals of oily *bringal* and rice with sometimes a suspicion of meat made us chary of taking too much exercise. In consequence our shilling a day pin-money was well expended in bowls of *leban*, while we endeavoured to be oblivious to the fact that no breakfast was provided by sleeping late into the morning.

We had the run of the hotel, but all exits were closely guarded by gendarmes under a particularly obnoxious "dog-collar" *chaoush*, as we called the Military Police, who wear crescent-shaped brass plates round their necks like a King Billy of Australian aborigines.

Most of our time was spent on the flat roof, watching rare sunsets and by day drinking in the warmth of the spring sunshine, while we patched and washed our clothes. This operation in my case meant wearing blankets borrowed from the bed, while my only pair of breeches and the sweater which did duty for a shirt were drying.

The wonderful ruined citadel standing in the heart of the city can be seen from practically any vantage point in Aleppo. On one occasion, when we were allowed to go to the bath, we made its closer acquaintance. Surmounting a symmetrical artificial mound faced with masonry, its design is an architectural joy, while its massive approaches and exquisitely proportioned gateways are some of the finest work of human hands.

One is further impressed when standing by the gateway that bridges the moat (now dry) by reflecting on the passage in "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" which deals with its capture by the Arabs in the seventh century. "It was only taken after a siege of five months and after a most stubborn defence by the Christians, who killed large numbers of the



attackers and were unmoved by the beheading of three hundred of their comrades before the castle wall."

Other than the citadel Aleppo has nothing to boast of, though its flat-topped sandstone houses profusely ornamented with iron scroll work in doorways and windows make it infinitely superior to anything Mesopotamian, especially as some attempt had been made to sanitise the town.

Flynn possessed a good voice—that attribute which redeems many Irishmen,—so our evenings were enlivened and the sleep of the neighbourhood disturbed by sing-songs that he led with a musical tenor.

Some days after our arrival Yeats-Brown developed a slight attack of fever. Though his complaint hardly demanded hospital attention, he thought that if admitted to hospital he might be able to supervise in some measure the treatment meted out to Fulton. Five days later he returned to us, a shadow of his former self. He had not been successful in seeing Fulton, his fever had been ignored, and after lying starved and unattended for two days he struggled out of bed to the office of the senior doctor, where, after saying what he thought of him and his methods, he fainted with weakness, but preferred to be brought back to the hotel rather than remain in the hospital any longer.

In a moment of disgust at finding columns of lice in the seams of some breeches he had purchased at Mosul, Treloar had thrown them from the train window as we were nearing Aleppo, donning instead a pair of khaki shorts that he was wearing at the time of his capture. Chill winds and frosty mornings had since developed severe rheumatism in his knees, and being granted the necessary permission he visited the hospital for treatment. While there he saw Corporal C——, one of the three British survivors of the two hundred and fifty odd men who had marched from the barracks at Mosul. C——'s feet were in a fearful condition; blood was trickling from a wound on his face which was distorted as if from blood poisoning; and he was in a dazed condition bordering on collapse, lying in a courtyard with a number Turks awaiting treatment. Corporal C—— was one of the most able-bodied of the British prisoners, of that sterling stamp of dogged British regular whose prototype served with Marlborough and Wellington. He had been wounded and taken prisoner during the retreat to Kut. By sheer stoicism, cheerfulness and physical determination he



ALEPPO: THE EASTERN GATE OF THE CITADEL.



had lived through the marches to Baghdad and Mosul, and somehow or other had struggled on to Aleppo.

Much to our surprise we heard later that he had even survived Aleppo, but more than a year afterwards, when working in bondage for his Turkish masters at a fever-stricken camp in the heart of Asia Minor, he succumbed to typhus, for which with numerous other prisoners in the same camp he had received no medical attention.

“Never the lotus closes, never the wild fowl wake  
But a soul goes out on the East wind, that died for England’s  
sake.”

Life at the hotel was the most pleasant we had experienced in captivity, though it was undoubtedly monotonous. Deprived of the solace of books or acceptable work that would help time to pass, our thoughts seemed incapable of taking a higher flight than ruminating on the possibilities of the next meal. Never did the dinner bell need to sound twice!

Fulton had returned from hospital grievously weak but rid of his fever, only to develop severe toothache. The dentist’s visit was a welcome diversion, except for the victim. He was a dapper Armenian wearing an astrachan fez and a conspicuous row of gold teeth.

“He can pull out teeth, yes!” his small boy interpreter replied to our enquiry. And forthwith “gold-teeth” attacked a molar of Fulton’s with about as much finesse as a horse doctor, dragging it out without an anæsthetic after much tugging and twisting. Thereupon I decided for the sake of my audience that my tooth should be stopped. After much skirmishing and describing of excited circles on the air with the drill as he told us what he thought of the Turks, he pressed some amalgam into the cavity with his finger and declared the job finished.

I paid him an instalment of one medjidieh of his demand for one and a half liras, and he agreed to trust me for the rest till pay day. But he was there next morning before we were out of bed, demanding the balance. His visit was unfortunate, for I had had scarcely a moment’s peace since he had left. I insisted that he should do the job thoroughly. There ensued such a to-do and pantomime of prayers, threats and supplica-

tions that I began to wish the Turk had been a little more thorough in the massacring business in Aleppo, while I hinted that I had a personal fancy for him myself.

Next day the *chaoush* was brought forward on the promise of increased backshish and declared that the Commandant had ordered that I pay the money to him, but I insisted on the work being properly performed. A further suppositious message arrived to say that I should pay the money to the proprietor. Seeing that I was adamant "gold-teeth" brought his drill and did the work with bad grace but more efficiency.

The following day we learned the reason for the dentist's agitation. The dog-collar *chaoush* and all his verminous crew appeared at noon to announce our immediate departure. "Puff-puff-Stamboul" and a bisecting of his fingers on the part of the *chaoush* denoted that we must leave in half-an-hour.

We ran downstairs to the meal that we had awaited so long. The proprietor saw his opportunity of retaliation for having his tariff reduced, or was fearful of our potentialities in the way of appetite, and refused to serve us. We returned to our packing, which in my case consisted in stuffing a few non-descript articles into an Arab saddle-bag.

Yeats-Brown mourned the loss of a safety razor and shaving kit bought in Baghdad, which he had made some attempt at using every day whether he needed it or not. "Expect one of these pariahs had souvenired it," someone suggested, indicating the assorted guard. And sure enough, he of the dog-collar was discovered using the apparatus as a preliminary to taking possession; nor did its rightful owner's wrath hasten its return till the *chaoush* had thoroughly completed a toilet that had evidently been postponed for weeks.

After much shoving and shouting we found ourselves in the street; but on the *chaoush* demanding three medjediehs per head in advance as payment for the arabahs, we downed tools, and sat on our bundles in the road, whereupon the arabahchis and the guard commenced a wild harangue. The hotel proprietor joined in the chorus by appearing on a lower balcony, shouting excitedly and waving his arms in a frenzied manner and making motions as if brushing his hair. We were puzzled by this performance, until his small son announced in French that we had stolen a hair brush.

We felt this was adding insult to injury, though there might have been a certain amount of truth in the innuendo, as we had recently recommenced brushing our hair. This was retribution for not selling us food, we thought, and we laughed as loud as empty stomachs would allow.

We had no reason for anxiety about the train, so enjoyed the abuse and vivid pictures of an untimely end that were drawn for us, composing ourselves resignedly on our bundles. We rightly believed that the *chaoush* would not allow us to miss the train because backshish was not forthcoming. And sure enough, with only a few minutes to spare, we were *yillared* aboard the arabahs and set off at a gallop for the station—without payment. We were beginning to understand the Turk! . . .

Once upon our journey we were able to feast our eyes upon pleasant hills and dales. The railway followed for some distance a picturesque and fertile winding valley, along which a river fringed with poplars and willows coursed its limpid way—a pleasing contrast to the brown monotony of Mesopotamia.

Six hours' travelling brought us after sunset to Islahieh, where the railway terminates among the foothills of the Anti-Taurus Mountains. We had a remote idea that our destination was Constantinople, but Flynn, who was always well informed, declared that a little bird had told him that we were going to Hobble-Gobble-Gobble, which being interpreted meant "Black Opium Den"!

Knowing Flynn's susceptibility to leg-pulls and his ability to convert trifling rumours into positive facts, we hoped his imagination was as active as usual. But when we heard from some Turkish doctors on the train that there was a town named Afion Kara Hissar, which meant Opium Black Tower, somewhere in Anatolia, we began to wonder if a tower or a den was to be our next habitat.

In a timber shanty at the Islahieh terminus we were fortunately able to buy some stew on which to break our day's fast, before turning in on the seats and floor of the train.

Morning unveiled before us the beauties of the Kurd Dagh, an offshoot of the Amanus Mountains, and a spur of the Taurus, its white peaks melting into the fleecy clouds, while purple foothills in the foreground enclosed the little village in an Alpine vale.

At this time the mountains had not been pierced for the railway, therefore it was necessary to continue the journey by road. Aboard the train we found Sergt. Blaker and the thirty sepoy of the unfortunate party from Mosul. We asked that arabahs might be provided for them for the route over the mountains, but the Commander of our guard, a bibulous little Moulassim, expressed surprise at the request and scorned the idea. While waiting at the station for our arabahs, Blaker, who will be remembered at Mosul as the sergeant telegraphist, gave me a few details of their march. The Turkish officer in charge of their party cared not the slightest for the welfare of his prisoners, riding off in the morning and disappearing till night. After the second day the Arab guard that had set out with them from Mosul, and whom we had bribed into being less callous than was usual, had been relieved by a Kurdish guard. The Kurds were cruel and heartless wretches who took delight in torturing the little band and seemed to think that their task was its extermination. Private X. had died the second night when sleeping out in his scanty clothes without cover. Y. had fallen from a donkey into a river and was found to be dead when pulled out. Z. was left behind with a sepoy on a cart that Haziri Singh had provided for the sepoy of the Consular Guard. The cart had broken down and the sepoy rejoined the column later with evidence of maltreatment, declaring that Z had been done to death by the guard because he was too weak to walk. W. had gone mad, and so on and so on. . . . For many nights they slept in the open when the muddy ground froze beneath them or rain beat down on them in torrents. Dead were left behind at every halt. Their food, consisting of a handful of flour a day, which they had to cook as best they could, was totally inadequate, and for two days they received no food at all! They were repeatedly hit if they lagged behind, and Blaker himself had been struck in the back with a rifle butt and though dazed was fortunately strong enough to keep on his feet.

Six arabahs being at length produced we took the weakest of the sepoy aboard with us and commenced the ascent of the mountain along a well-made road that described the most fantastic twists and turns. Whitewashed houses clung like swallows' nests to the steep mountain face, their flat roofs looking like steps cut in the mountain side. Strings of

sauntering camels padded noiselessly by and many transport carts passed us, including one with a German monoplane in tow.

Owing to the steep ascent and the bitter cold we tramped beside the arabahs, the road zigzagging gradually to the snow line along a pine-clad mountain side, where numerous flowers grew in wild profusion—jonquils and daffodils, daphne, violets, lilies, many variegated anemones, and clumps of iris.

Five thousand feet up we looked down from the summit to where ancient Antioch, its glory departed and its Christian inhabitants fugitives in the mountains, stood among its swamps, with Islahieh and other villages mere spots upon a hazy plain.

The descent on the other side was accomplished with the brakeless arabahs rattling along at an exciting pace and pushing the horses faster than they were willing to go. Devil's elbows and hairpin bends were negotiated in dashing style, the vehicles alternately swaying out towards unfenced embankments where we seemed in imminent danger of toppling into the abyss, then swinging along to the next turn where the road cut deep into the mountainside where we raced so fast that turning again without capsizing seemed impossible. A swift flowing stream with many waterfalls gurgled beside us, at length becoming diverted into frothing channels that drove water-wheels in the valley villages far beneath us.

We spent the night at Hassan Beyli, a large Armenian village of sandstone houses clinging to the mountainside. Most of the houses were occupied by octogenarian roadmenders, the Armenians having been butchered *à la Turquie*. We had noticed shops along the road where we fondly expected to buy food. But our venomous Moulassim, who was always more or less fuddled with *rakki*, placed us in the custody of the guard and left us. We soon found that he was so afraid of our escape that he preferred to place the responsibility upon the bovine gendarmes, whom he frequently struck and spat upon to keep them thoroughly cowed.

Gesticulation and eloquent pantomime to express hunger were only rewarded by stolid *yoks* from our guards. A small tin of sardines, three or four rusks, and some raisins which Treloar and I had gleaned from bags we had filled at Mosul,



had to suffice for eleven of us, besides which we had to pay for our beds, which we did not use owing to the typhus-ravaged condition of the whole district.

Daybreak found us on the move towards the Giaour Dagh (Infidel Mountain) along a road looked down upon at intervals by Byzantine castles perched on dizzy heights.

As we climbed the mountain side on foot, chilled by the frosty air, three of us had advanced some distance beyond the arabahs, whereupon our besotted guard commander yelled to his men and the leading arabahchi to stop. Purple with rage because in his heavy greatcoat and top boots he had been unable to keep up with us, he soundly whipped the two gendarmes responsible for us, struck the arabahchi in the face, and yelling himself hoarse came striding towards us, swinging his riding whip above his head. "What shall we do if he uses the whip?" someone asked. "Give him the thumping of his life and chance the consequences," we agreed and waited. Fortunately for him and for us his rage abated before he reached us, and he struck the gendarmes again instead.

A zigzag climb that at each turn brought new panoramas of snow-capped peaks and jutting rocks before us preluded an exciting descent down the farther side of the Giaour Dagh to Marmoure, where a railway line had been carried out from Tarsus and Adana to the foot of the mountain.

A scar high above us on the hillside showed where a tunnel had already been commenced to forge a further link in the *Chemin de Fer de Baghdad*.

The Commandant of the camp was a German staff officer; the neatness of the camp loudly proclaiming that Turkish inefficiency did not reign there. His Haughtiness, however, who wore a monocle that under the conditions even Y.-B. could not rival, did not deign to notice us. We were weak and irritable with hunger and seeing a young German standing stiffly alongside regarding us intently, we took pains to ignore him. At last the lay-figure unbent and said in perfect English, "I presume you are British officers?" "Yes," said I, grasping at the possibility of food. "Is there anything I can do for you?" . . . On recovering from our surprise we told him that thanks to the inebriate who was in charge of us we were exceedingly hungry and should be glad if we could purchase food for ourselves and a party of sepoys that would arrive

shortly. The German, who proved to have been educated at Cambridge and had been a member of a prominent club in Edinburgh, successfully side-tracked the Moulassim and took us to a cookshop where we were able to obtain food enough to satisfy even our wants. We persuaded him also, on relating the hardships and cruelties suffered by the sepoys, to parade them before the Commandant. Mainly owing to Brodie's efforts (himself a victim to ill-treatment later), assisted by their pitiful appearance, the worst cases were admitted to hospital, food was distributed, and we were also permitted to buy food and milk for them.

While making these purchases the young German left us, attaching in his stead a ragged Armenian, who also spoke good English. Under cover of discussing the quality of the food we were buying, the Armenian told us that he had been a professor of modern languages in Aleppo before the war, but preferred the lot of an unpaid hospital orderly to having his throat cut. The German showed further proof of his goodwill by getting us a never-to-be-forgotten omelette apiece from the officers' mess.

Our railway journey next day took us out of the region of mountains and castles and typhus-stricken camps, into the plains of Cicilia.

Ancient Cicilia lies on the shores of the Gulf of Alexandretta, in the triangle formed by the Amanus, Taurus and Anti-Taurus mountains. This fertile plain has been built up by the alluvium carried down from the mountains by three rivers which once bore the classic names of Sarus, Cydnus and Pyramus. Every notable conqueror of these regions crossed this fertile plain. Of its once famous cities, Mallus, Anazarba, Sis, Missis, Adana and Tarsus, only the two last remain.

North of the Taurus mountains lies Anatolia, where Turkish instead of Arabic becomes the common tongue, with Armenian and Greek in their respective communities.

Red-roofed houses took the place of mud hovels, and passing through a region of orchards and vineyards we reached Adana, which in non-industrial Turkey seemed singularly incongruous with its smoking factory chimneys.

It is to the cotton industry that both Adana and Tarsus owe their present existence, some enterprising Greeks having imported a cotton ginning machine in the sixties, and in the

face of much discouragement, developing cotton spinning to a great industry.

From Adana there is a short railway to the coast that passes through Tarsus. This line was built originally by British capital though later taken over by the Anatolian Railway Company, a purely German concern. Strangely enough, as on the *Chemin de Fer de Baghdad*, French is the official language, spoken by a staff that is mainly Greek. We enjoyed a sample of their rigid adherence to the official tongue when two ragged lamp trimmers had a wordy altercation outside our carriage door and succeeded in definitely saying what they thought of each other without once having recourse to their native tongue.

At Kaleh Bogaz, a junction about three miles from Tarsus, the sepoys were taken from the train. Much to our joy the train started after the Moulassim and the guard had got off, and for a few moments while the Moulassim jumped with rage on the platform and two of the guard pursued us, as we waved joyfully to him we saw visions of freedom. But there are faster things than Turkish trains and the soldiers succeeded in getting aboard before the locomotive had attained its express speed. Something special in the way of punishment must have been promised them if any of us succeeded in getting away, as during the remainder of the journey to Tarsus they kept their rifles ready and would not let us move.

The Moulassim emphasised his arrival at Tarsus on a later train by counting us several times and by soundly slapping the faces of the guard, after which we drove in arabahs to an old and tumble-down hotel.

It being St. Patrick's Day, Flynn, though as poverty-stricken as the rest of us, generously decided to warm the cockles of our hearts with some of the best our host could provide. The result was a sing-song over some inferior wine and fiery Greek cognac and *billiards* on a table that was old enough to have been played upon by the companions of St. Paul's youth. A billiard table of any kind was an incongruity in Turkey,—and we played till the small hours upon its bunkered surface.

One of the habitués of the hotel was an interned Frenchman who made himself known to X. and Y. of our party, hinting at the proximity of the coast and the rumour of a projected

landing by British and Italian troops. Unfortunately his information fell on stony ground, for X. and Y. never at any time entertained the thought of leaving Turkey without the permission of our hosts. When next he called, the Moulassim, recently returned from a debauch, had added his unwelcome presence to the company, therefore the Frenchman considered it unwise to remain and did not call again.

The price of our bed and breakfast having almost reduced us to penury, we were obliged to ask for cheaper lodgings. And as the guards were perturbed that there were no bars to our windows, the Moulassim in a sober moment recommended a change, telling us of a commodious mansion belonging to the Commandant of the town. It was certainly commodious, being simply a large empty house with broken windows, that had no doubt been forcibly taken from the Armenians.

Hour succeeded hour and we could obtain neither food nor drink; the ragged guards adhering strictly to orders, refusing to bring us water and forbidding our going to a canal close by. Fortunately it was raining hard, which it continued to do throughout our stay, and we found a place where we could lean out of the window till our mouths were in line with a leaky spout.

Atkins had been ailing for some time, his fever developing suddenly into a weakness in the legs with severe facial contortions that were aggravated by light. In consequence he retired to one of the numerous cupboards which are always to be found in Turkish houses. With morbid curiosity, not unmingled with amusement, we could not refrain from taking surreptitious glances in order to watch the poor fellow's grimaces. To such lengths does idle captivity reduce one!

Hungry, thirsty and cold, we stormed to some purpose when next the Moulassim called, upon which he disappeared to return with an under-sized Moulassim Sani (Second Lieutenant) who spoke French. The boy interpreted that we had been all day without food or drink and we suggested that he should take us to an eating-house where we could obtain provisions at a reasonable price.

It would have been difficult to find a more disreputable or fly-specked café than the one to which we were led, but we ate with relish all that was placed before us, while our youthful custodian did his best to impress us by soundly smacking the

face of a herculean soldier who was presumptuous enough to covet a seat at the table beside him.

A much needed visit to the *hammam* followed, for the Moulassim Sani, fresh from the Military Academy, was anxious to show us that he was *tout-à-fait civilisé*.

The figures that flitted about the half-lit corridors, the weird reverberations of every guttural sound and the unnatural atmosphere gave the bath the appearance of a tomb, where shadowy ghosts like troubled souls came to visit some ancient fane. Nor was any great stretch of imagination necessary to visualise the bath of Roman days, especially as carved capitols of fallen marble pillars from some splendid edifice of the past were used as washing fountains.

Tarsus has sadly decayed since St. Paul was pleased to describe the place of his birth as "no mean city". The successive conquests of Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs and Turks, together with the retrogressive policy of the last, have reduced it to the mean and hopeless condition of the ordinary Turkish provincial town. A monument of the Assyrian Kings, Tarsus was one of the three great university cities of the pagan world. Conqueror after conqueror marching from the north to fame or oblivion in the fields of Mesopotamia and Palestine occupied it as a preliminary, and for long it marked the limit of Arab encroachment upon the Byzantine Empire. Leaders as diverse as Tamerlane and Godfrey de Bouillon, the Crusader, captured it. Justinian beautified it, building several still existent bridges in its vicinity. Haroun-el-Raschid fortified it and Cleopatra sailed up the Cydnus in a galley with purple sails to be received there by Mark Antony!

Modern Tarsus, like modern Adana, is principally of importance (or rather saved from disintegration) by the cotton market; a few mills driven by water power obtained from a river that is now useless for navigation being its sole industrial activity.

The most important modern building is a large American school, which under the able direction of Dr. Christie has been of great assistance to the Armenians. I was reminded of this fact in the bath when an Armenian in the Turkish service sidled up to me and whispered "Jesus . . . Dr. Christie", raising his bunched fingers above his head in the Turkish manner to signify that both had his approval.

At a hint from the Moulassim Sani that the morrow night would see us on the move again, we were about to buy some food for the journey when the Moulassim, truculent and drunken, pounced upon us. Cracking his whip furiously, roaring and blustering, he declared that no more should we be allowed in the streets of Tarsus. To-morrow at dawn we would leave for Constantinople. Our request to buy food was refused and we were peremptorily escorted back to the hotel, where we had again taken up residence.

Next morning, packed four in an arabah, in addition to a sentry and an arabahchi, we set out in the rain to cross the Taurus Mountains.

On the plain and in the foothills a few miles from the town we passed an extensive defensive position with well prepared fire trenches. The Moulassim's loquacious Armenian orderly informed us that when the massacre took place in Tarsus, a number of the inhabitants had defended themselves in this position, putting up a brave fight against Turkish troops, eventually retiring to safety in the mountains.\*

At a village close by we picked up the two Subadars (who could never accustom themselves to sit down to meals with us), together with three sepoy who were too sick to march when the remainder of their party had recommenced their journey the previous day.

Toiling along a winding road as we climbed upward, we were able to appreciate the rugged grandeur of the Taurus Mountains, which if not in height, at least in beauty and majesty, are comparable with any in the world.

Snow-capped peaks floated in the clouds above a black forest of pines; great jagged rocks in fantastic spires and pillars cut patterns against the sky, while a cloudy mist veiled and enveloped us in its elusive folds. Ravines and valleys were choked with snow but near the roadside the ground was carpeted with a wealth of flowers that far exceeded the profusion of the Amanus Mountains.

The mountain villages were full of soldiers (as also was

\* Sooner than suffer butchery or the misery of endless marching, some of the Armenian communities resolved to sell their lives dearly. One of the most notable instances was that of the 4000 inhabitants of the villages near Antioch, who, when ordered from their homes in July 1915, retired to the Jibal Mousa Mountains on the Gulf of Alexandretta, and for fifty-five days successfully resisted the attacks of 15,000 Turkish troops and civilians, until with all their women and children they were taken off by French warships to Port Said. See "Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire" (p. 516), by Viscount Bryce.

Tarsus, owing to the expected landing) and hundreds of elderly Armenian road menders worked in the bitter cold beside the highways. Life is cheap in Turkey and numbers of mounds showed how war was taking its toll among the aged as well as the youth of the nation.

German motor transport passed us at intervals, and at sunset we entered a rocky gorge whose perpendicular sides rose to a great height. Emerging, we entered a wooded valley through which a mountain stream found its way.

In the centre of the valley, in strong contrast to a squalid Kurdish village close by, nestled a German encampment, with row upon row of motor lorries and touring cars parked alongside.

We hoped that there would be some good Samaritan among the Boche as at Marmoure, for we had not eaten that day, but to our disgust we were taken past the camp to the Kurdish village.

The hovels of which it was composed were built of boulders and rough timbers and were as squalid as anything we had seen. The filth and excrescence of ages had accumulated in the dark and verminous den allotted to us. Cattle were let into the room beneath, doors were barred, there were no lights, and we were most vigilantly guarded both outside and in by a number of villainous local gendarmes.

Our only rations were two or three oranges, half-a-dozen biscuits and a little tea. Only seven remained to divide the eatables, however, as Yeats-Brown had developed a fever similar to Atkins and could not eat.

Seven sepoy had been left behind from the ever-dwindling party that was a day ahead of us. They had been given bread three days before and that night had been served with a little *kurrawanna* (stew). Unlike us they were unfortunate enough to be put on the ground floor of one of the houses, where the earth was wet with drainage and the droppings of cattle. There was one dry corner where they wished to lay their tired bodies, but this was forbidden them although the gendarmes did not want it themselves. One of the unhappy creatures died during that night and when they reported his death to us in the morning when we were lifting them on to our arabahs with our own sick, Major Reilly vigorously protested to the Moulassim, receiving only threats and a storm of abuse in reply.

Leaving the dirt and misery of Shamala at an early hour, we were soon climbing a road frequently crossed by the old Roman road to the highest point of the Taurus.

We learned later from the Armenian orderly that extra guards had been called up from the village to watch us at Shamala, in case we attempted to join the Armenian insurgents who were roaming the mountains. Weakness and hunger were sufficient gaolers, even had we known this fact.

A vista of towering peaks rose before us as we left the valley, their snow-capped summits scarcely visible among the fleecy clouds which blended so harmoniously that only brown scars and fissures where rocks were split asunder showed where the tangible melted into the intangible. Each turn of the road disclosed scenery that was wilder and grander, till at the highest point we entered a ravine of extraordinary beauty. The rugged walls rose perpendicularly to an immense height and as we progressed the gorge gradually tapered to a narrow pass, with two great tongues of rock almost closing the mouth of this converging valley which, when the world was young, must have been a fissure in the rocks. Time, the erosion of a small river, and the hand of man, had widened it sufficiently to carry a broad road, which hugged the perpendicular rock, a brawling stream occupying the rest of its width.

Truly we were on classic ground! Before us stood the Cilician Gates, the famous *Pylae Ciliciae*, through which Cyrus, Alexander, Barbarossa and a host of other conquerors had marched. Since the dawn of history, this pass had looked down upon the armies of the Hittites, the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Tartars and Turks, as they passed between its portals, locking as they do the route to the Orient. The great wall bears many evidences of ancient invaders, and high above the river bed Hittite and Roman tablets are cut in the rock face, one of them by Marcus Aurelius.

Leaving the ravine of the Cilician Gates, we commenced the descent, rounding difficult turns at top speed while dodging clumsy buffalo carts or strings of foolish camels, until, turning a bend in the road we issued suddenly into the valley where lies Bozanti, the existing terminus of the Anatolian section of the *chemin de fer de Baghdad*. This valley is known to history as the Vale of Podandus and is celebrated as the camp of Cyrus and later of Alexander.



It required no great stretch of imagination to take us back to the earliest days, for had we been barbarian prisoners in the hands of old-world conquerors we would have received more consideration.

Though two of our party were too weak to walk and the remaining nine were feeble and hungry, we were kept in a tent on the bleak mountainside for twelve hours without food, while a piercing wind mercilessly debated whether it would allow the tent to remain standing.

Our disreputable guard commander mobilised a murderous band of Turkish irregulars to guard us, while he indulged in a carousal with some friends in the camp. These ruffians interpreted his orders so literally and so willingly that we dared not put a head outside or attempt to peg down the flapping sides of the tent without risk of being bayoneted.

We asked a German corporal who looked in at our tent if we might be permitted to buy food, also if some attention be given the sick. He promised to send some food to us and that the sick would receive care. But though a doctor called to give medicine to Yeats-Brown no food arrived though we waited throughout a cold and miserable night.

We were turned out at dawn, cold and stiff, and supporting our sick, were taken down hill to the railway station. It is typical of the Turk that he does not consult a time-table when he wishes to travel by train, but Micawber-like waits for something to turn up.

We waited for six hours, cold and miserable, before our train arrived. Much to our delight we were able to buy food—a few flaps of coarse bread and a little *hulwa*, a sweetmeat made from grapes, which we ate while awaiting departure. It mattered not that the hands of the bread vendor were the dirtiest in Asia, nor that the bread was inferior even to our customary rations.

The sepoys were also waiting on the station. For once they had been accommodated better than we had been, having been housed in a stable which though reeking with filth had protected them from the elements. As they lay half-dead about the platform, their emaciated bodies and lacerated feet showed the terrible ordeal to which they had been subjected. The great majority were suffering from dysentery and all were in a disgusting state.

Yeats-Brown was too weak to stand, and while asleep on the platform among some empty bags had an experience that appeared amusing to all but himself. He had wrapped himself in a green and white *resai* that he had bought at Mosul, and being barely noticeable owing to excessive thinness, some porters carrying bundles of baggage deposited their loads upon him.

The first ten miles of railway after leaving Bozanti is a continuous engineering masterpiece composed of embankments, bridges and tunnels. Mountain after mountain is pierced and at intervals we flashed into the light of day to find ourselves snaking along a narrow ledge on a vertical rock face or crossing swift flowing rivers at dizzy heights on slender bridges that seemed like spider webs in proportion to the enormous chasms they spanned.

Suddenly the scenery changed and we were traversing the undulating fertile table-land of Anatolia.

That, in addition to being of political and strategical importance, the Baghdad railway was a business proposition for its German financiers is to be seen at a glance on that stretch of line between the Taurus Mountains and Konia. The line was tendered for in sections of certain mileage, and the Turks who thought they detected a bargain in the Konia section, which, if built in a bee line would run into the Taurus Mountains, jumped at the price quoted. In constructing the line, however, the Germans wriggled it about the plain, placing the stations wherever they thought fit, and by numerous loops and unnecessary meanderings making up the mileage without entering the mountains, thus realising a handsome profit.

Konia, the Iconium of the ancient Greeks, was reached about 9 p.m., the train remaining there for the night. The Moulassim, who was drinking heavily, refused to allow us on the platform even to buy food, so we munched what crusts we had left, cursed the lice, and did our best for the sick.

Konia was at one time the capital of the Seljuk Turks and fell into the hands of the Crusaders of the Third Crusade. St. Paul knew it to his cost, for on one of his visits he was stoned from the town. In Biblical days it was a prosperous city, and somewhere within its precincts lie the bones of Plato. To us it was principally notable for the fact that the Moulassim in a sober moment, when next morning he saw the sorry state

of the sick, allowed Brodie and me to leave the train, suitably guarded of course, to buy *yourt* (curds) for ourselves and our sick, though it was so putrid we could scarcely eat it.

Next day we bumped and jerked along, gradually climbing up to the rocky plateau of Central Asia Minor, until some time after midnight we were turned out into the darkness at Afion Kara Hissar. The stupid Moulassim had forgotten to wire ahead so that we were not expected, nobody knew our exact destination and in consequence there were no arabahs available. After waiting an hour or two in the cold we asked for the sake of the sick if we might lie in some of the station sheds till daylight. This caused the Moulassim to suddenly bestir himself and with much fuss and bluster (he usually accompanied an order to the guard or his orderly with a blow) we collected our heterogenous bundles and were moved off into the darkness, supporting the sick as best we could.

Continued under-feeding and the starvation of the last four days had considerably weakened us, and though Reilly and I were the only two of our party who were fortunate enough not to be ill, I felt unequal to carrying the muddy and verminous bedding which I had used in various ways since acquiring it in Baghdad.

The sepoys had been closely confined in a truck, from which they were turned out weak and shivering to limp after us in the darkness, with the gentle encouragement of blows from the guard.

We seemed to march for hours, so frequently did we halt because of the feebleness of some of the party and our guards' ignorance of the way.

Eventually we entered the darkened streets of a large town, and after stumbling over its rough cobbles we halted in a courtyard adjoining a mosque.

We lay upon our bundles for about three hours, awaiting further instructions, while the moon came out from behind a bank of clouds and lit up the outlines of the mosque and our unhappy party. Noticing a group of wailing sepoys around the inert body of one of their comrades, I enquired the cause, to be told by Sergt. Blaker that as some of the sick were too weak to move he went to their aid and found that the guard had knocked a young Sikh unconscious with their rifle butts for not leaving the railway truck quickly enough. The same guards

had beaten them badly at Bozanti. Thinking that he might be able to resuscitate the youth, Blaker and an Indian comrade of the Sikh's had placed the sepoy on a blanket, and though weak and exhausted themselves had dragged him all the way from the station. I turned him over and felt sure he was dead.

Just at this moment an English-speaking Turkish Naval officer appeared out of the darkness. The Moulassim's truculence changed to servile respect before his superior, but I lost no time in denouncing him roundly to the newcomer, reporting the incident of the Sikh, the brutal treatment received by the men generally, and requesting that he and his guard be suitably punished. The Turk promised that a full enquiry would be made, and luckily the Sikh recovered. We were told later that the Moulassim had been punished, but as it is a difficult matter in Turkey to recognise truth when one hears it, we were never sure if he received his deserts.

The sepoys were taken to a barracks close to the mosque, and under the guidance of the new arrival we were piloted to an empty house in the Armenian quarter, which, unlike the mud hovels of the past weeks, was moderately clean. About 4 a.m. we were left alone to curl up on the floor to sleep.

Next morning we received a visit from the Commandant of the camp and a Russian doctor, and were told that there were other British prisoners in the town—prisoners from Gallipoli and Naval prisoners from submarines sunk in the Marmora. We were declared to be free from typhus, but owing to our verminous and dirty conditions a fortnight's quarantine was ordered. About midday cold meat and salad besides other good things arrived for us, "with the compliments of the British prisoners". And like ravenous savages we ate to satiety.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AFION KARA HISSAR

**D**URING the afternoon we were visited by some of the British prisoners. In their ready-made civilian suits, clean and comparatively well fed, we could not but eye them with envy, which caused some amusement, as did our gratitude for the food, cigarettes and other good things they lavished upon us. Manna came to us also in the shape of a small mattress each from the Russian officer prisoners, which was our first acquaintance with that generosity which seems inborn in the true Russian.

A bath further rejoiced us, and on our way home we were permitted to visit our fellow prisoners through the persuasiveness of a tall but ragged Irishman\* who spoke Turkish well. Comparative comfort seemed to reign in the Armenian house where they were quartered. Tables and chairs that were passable imitations of the genuine articles and beds of timber and string had been made by dexterous hands, and there we were introduced to *raki*, the Turkish equivalent of whisky.

This spirit, which all prisoners in Turkey came to know, is a colourless fluid with an aniseed flavour and might be likened to second rate absinthe. In Egypt it is known as *arak* and by the *Roums*, the native Greeks of Asia Minor, it is called *mastik*. Though disagreeable at first, it improves on acquaintance, and being obtainable at that time at twelve piastres per *oke* (about 1/- per pint), it was a cheap and useful aid to forgetfulness.

We learned that there was another house of British prisoners, who numbered about thirty in all, in addition to nine French and about fifty Russians.

\* Lieut. Sir Robert Paul, Royal Flying Corps.

Most of the seventeen officers in the house we visited were survivors of the lost legions of Gallipoli.\*

One officer† had fallen badly wounded close to a Turkish trench, but believing him to be dead the Turks placed him on their parapet, using him as a rifle rest for a whole day before they discovered him to be alive. Another‡, badly wounded in the foot and unable to retire when an exposed trench was evacuated, was bayoneted five times, though luckily a cigarette case took the sting out of the most vigorous thrust. A third§, after seeing his brother killed beside him, had been shot right through the chest where his heart should have been, yet had thoroughly recovered.

But airmen and crews of submarines related stories which were unique in the annals of war. Unlike the soldier or sailor, they had no traditions of regiment or ship to uphold, and had had their own history to make. In the light of the exploits of some of the submarine men at Afion Kara Hissar, it is certain that future generations will claim they commenced well.

After cruising more than halfway round the world, the Australian submarine, A.E. 2, commanded by Lieut.-Commander Stoker, R.N., was the first to negotiate the difficult passage of the Dardanelles, though a French and a British submarine had previously tried.|| After grounding and running the gauntlet of enemy submarine chasers, and sending an enemy ship to Kingdom Come, they had the bad luck to be sent to the bottom by a Turkish destroyer. Fortunately every member of the crew was saved.\*\*

The E.7, commanded by Lieut.-Commander Cochrane (mysteriously absent from camp that day), had enjoyed more exciting adventures. After having made one successful and useful visit to the Marmora they were caught in the net which the Turks had stretched across the Narrows. For ten hours they endeavoured to extricate themselves while the Turks exploded submarine mines for their benefit. It was only when the sounding line of a mine dropper accurately located them that they decided to surrender. Pumping out their tanks, they

\* Four hundred officers and four thousand men were officially declared missing in this campaign, but only seventeen officers and about five hundred men were taken prisoner.

† Lieut. W. Fawkes.    ‡ Lieut. Davenport, 9th West Yorks.    § Lieut. Granger, Manchesters. were killed by shell fire, the remainder being taken prisoner.

\*\* See "Straws in the Wind" by Commander H. G. Stoker.

|| Of the French submarine, the *Amethyst*, only four of the crew were taken prisoner, and of the British submarine, the *M.15*, the Commander (Lieut.-Commander Brodie) and seven men

rose to the surface and jumped overboard after scuttling the ship.

In such company the time passed with aggravating quickness, and we were loth to return to our quarantine. No matter how interesting one's companions may be, prolonged and compulsory association in a confined space tends to enlarge the supposed weaknesses of one's fellows to iniquities of the first degree, and one longs for a change, however untried the company.

Back in the empty house we settled ourselves to the fortnight's quarantine before being again allowed into the company of our fellow-men. Unfortunately we started badly by rousing the ire of the second in command in the town. In an endeavour to live up to our new surroundings, two of us commenced "lousing" our ragged clothes upon the flat roof, where the sun compensated in some measure for our temporary semi-nudity. Loud shouts and imprecations from an adjacent house, followed by the excited entry of a Turkish officer into our domain, told us that behind the closed lattices of a house near-by, we had been entertaining the officer's wife—or wives!

We were given permission to visit the Gallipoli prisoners on the afternoon of the fourth day, and the able-bodied among us had already started on our way when we were suddenly called to a halt in the street by a highly excited Turkish officer, who counted us over and over.

There was a noisy discussion with the guards, whereupon we were marched back to our house, where each guard severally and individually counted us again and yet again, until we could almost count in Turkish ourselves. We learned afterwards that the excitement was caused by the escape of some British officers.

Knowing the way of the Turk, we expected to be punished, so were not surprised when two days later we were ordered to pack up. Marched to the intersection of two streets, close by the public fountain, we found the Russian, French and British officer prisoners of the town already lined up round the square. A more heterogeneous collection could not have been gathered together. Carrying various articles of home-made furniture or musical instruments, dressed in extraordinary and wonderful uniforms or nondescript "civvies", they looked

more like a comic opera company called before the curtain with all their property and make-up, than officers of the allied armies.

There were Russians of the Navy and Mercantile Marine resplendent in peaked caps and gilt buttons, whose most cherished possessions appeared to be mandolines; Frenchmen in grey jackets and red pantaloons, and others in navy blue; slouched-hatted Australians and Britishers in oddly assorted clothing which sometimes combined a battered military hat with ill-fitting mufti. Some carried cooking utensils, others deck chairs, another sported a banjo, and two led dogs.

While we waited, each was able to appreciate the ludicrous appearance of his fellows, and to enjoy a laugh at the expense of others, while forgetting the grotesqueness of his own.

Eventually we were marshalled into two lines and moved off to the tune of a never-ending marching song struck up by a giant on crutches,\* wearing pyjama trousers and a bowler hat.

Descending a steep, roughly cobbled street that rang to the echoes of:—

“We won’t be bothered (?) about,  
Wherever we go we’ll always shout—  
We’re bothered if we’ll be bothered about,  
We won’t be bothered about, etc., etc.”,

we climbed towards a church that stood at the foot of an immense perpendicular rock in the centre of the town.

A number of Armenian women and children of all ages sat outside the church on bundles of clothing. They looked very sad and miserable, and little wonder, for their menfolk had been killed, their houses and furniture confiscated and now they were being turned into the street from their last possible sanctuary.

The church measured about 100 feet by 80 feet within, and was well built of stone, with a gallery at one end. Once inside, its massive door was slammed behind us and we were told that we were to be closely confined there until further orders.

\* Capt. H. J. Dawes, 2/10th Gurkhas.



The prisoners are herded in a church;  
An hundred camped together on the floor;  
And through the wondrous world a man might search  
Yet fail to find a group that varied more  
In travel and in strange experience.†

During the day the improvised beds and home-made chairs and tables of long service prisoners arrived in the custody of orderlies, allotted to the various messes, and soon the floor was heaped high with the conglomeration of goods and chattels.

Nobody appeared depressed. A Frenchman seated upon a bundle of odds and ends was fiddling popular airs, while mandolins tinkled to the accompaniment of Russian songs that added to the medley and babel of sound. To us, who had so recently "come up out of tribulation in Babylonia", it was a pleasant variation, and having no furniture to lose we had little to worry about, and considered the sympathy misplaced that was extended to us for having stumbled upon a "strafe" so soon.

Furniture was gradually sorted out, and messes established in corners where kindred spirits could sleep, drink and curse the Turk together.

As night approached, the Russians took a gloomier view of the situation, and after our sing-song had died down they rendered "God Save the King", "Marseillaise" and their own beautiful anthem musically and fervently, before dividing the night into watches, in readiness for the massacre they believed would take place. Throughout the night one of them tramped steadily and noisily up and down the aisle in order to be ready to sound the alarm.

Roll-call at an early hour, followed by a search, made the next day notable, and from then onwards roll-call was taken twice daily, though Turkish mispronunciation and a confusion of Christian names with surnames caused a good deal of amusement and made the names hardly recognisable. The search resulted in the confiscation of all articles of Turkish clothing, together with several precious diaries and notebooks, a broken air-gun and a cricket ball.

The cricket ball had been sent from Constantinople by the American Embassy some months before, but when one of the

† "The Armenian Church" by John Still, from "Poems in Captivity."

Turkish soldiers whispered *bomba*, it was handled very gingerly and taken outside, where cautious attempts were made to unscrew it. I had carefully hidden my diaries in the backs of the knees of my breeches, thus escaping detection, though I found when I was obliged to sort out my kit on the floor in front of the Kolassi (second-in-command) and his guards, that I had not selected the most comfortable hiding place.

A truculent *chaoush* of military police commanded the guard, and when this fellow advanced menacingly towards a French submarine officer for not moving quickly enough, another Frenchman interposed, whereupon the *chaoush* with hand on bayonet rushed at him but was stopped by the Turkish officer in charge. The Frenchman was led outside and much to his indignation had his face slapped by the Turk. Furious at such treatment, he told the Turk that though in his power at the moment, neither difficulties nor distance would prevent him returning to Turkey after the war to avenge the insult. . . .

We numbered a hundred odd. The church door was kept locked and for the first two weeks, until latrines were built in the vestry, sanitation of any kind was difficult and we could only wash occasionally.

Orderlies had been allotted us from soldier prisoners quartered at the Madrisseh, a party of them being allowed to go to the bazaar under escort to purchase our food. I asked that one of them might be an Australian as two of my countrymen were in our mess. Accordingly "Bluey" Matthews from Queensland, ex-shearer and professional boxer, and Corp. Summers, a little lame Cockney who had been shot, bayoneted, and had his thigh broken on the day of his capture, were sent us.

Both men preferred orderly duty with moderately good food to being herded under-fed in the cells of the Madrisseh.

"Bluey" belonged to the 9th Australian battalion, which had been the first to set foot on Gallipoli, and was captured some months later in a demonstration where he was left out with a badly shattered arm. He was proud of the numerous pieces of bone (kept in a bottle) which were taken from his arm without chloroform, though he would mournfully confess that he would be able to put very little weight into a punch with that arm in future.

The two were inseparable, but unfortunately for the com-

bination, Summers sickened with typhus and died after a week or two in the church. "Bluey" could not remain without him so returned disconsolately to the Madrisseh. More than a year later his almost useless arm was restored to strength by a strange accident. He had been fattening a rooster that he had bought, and at Christmas time when endeavouring to catch it, he tripped, and in the endeavour to save himself fell on the injured arm and broke it again. Fortunately for him the arm knit strongly, though I learnt from bystanders that "Bluey's" language (which was purple at the quietest of times) was distinctly sulphurous when the rooster, after surveying the fallen gladiator, walked off to a little distance and crowed. . . .

A Russian orderly who had been taken to hospital also died a few days after Summers. The Russians made a coffin and demanded to bury him. Permission being granted, many of us made the most of the opportunity and went as mourners. But after wandering from hospital to hospital without success, we were eventually informed by the Turks that the man had been interred two days before.

Haziri Singh, the stoical Subadar of the Consul Guard, was the next to succumb to the dread disease. The gradual annihilation of his devoted little detachment had seriously undermined the health of the sturdy old patriot. He would not adapt himself to European habits and lived with a compatriot at the Madrisseh, where, too proud to complain and superior to his surroundings and his associates, he was an easy prey to disease.

A special Commission arrived from Constantinople about a week after our incarceration in the church and commenced an inquiry into the disappearance of the three officers, Lieut.-Commanders Cochrane and Stoker and Lieut. Price, R.N., who had escaped on the night of our arrival. The inquiry lasted for some days, all those belonging to the house from which the officers escaped being closely interrogated.

A few evenings later their solemn conclave was daringly parodied in a farce called "The Escape", which was rehearsed in the gallery and staged on the chancel of the church as the grand finale of a clever variety show.

Lieut. John Scaife, of the E.7, who during a diversified career had been actor and stage manager of a London theatre,

produced the show, as later he did many others during our long days at Afion Kara Hissar.

Act 1 showed the escapees weirdly disguised and hung with pots and pans, creeping down the chancel steps with a clatter loud enough to wake the dead, but through which the Turkish *posta* (sentry) sleeps audibly upon a sack containing disguises from which he is safely lifted without waking. Scene 2 discloses the discovery. Furious and frequent counts are taken of officers while the ancient *posta* between naps cadges cigarettes. An excited search is made under tables and chairs and each man is personally searched, without result. The Commandant then hands a piece of paper to the *posta* and commences to dictate a telegram, but the *posta*, supposing it to be for a cigarette, squats on the floor and commences to roll one. At last the wire is written, and after it has been twice lost is eventually despatched attached to the *posta's* clothing.

The third scene shows the trial, where the Commandant is asked how much money he had received and if he is prepared to share it. On replying in the negative he is ordered to be shot by the *posta* who wears a tiny fez of pink paper and whose extreme itchiness and general make-up was exceedingly like-like. The latter is awakened from a nap to perform the deed. British witnesses are examined and their signatures to the evidence obtained on the pretence that the document is an order for *raki*, after which the Armenian interpreter (Scaife), having obsequiously performed his difficult duty, is declared to be an accomplice and told that he will be let off lightly by having his property confiscated.

Vocal and instrumental items by the Russians concluded a programme that for a few hours carried us beyond the four walls of the church. In the strange surroundings, with the interior of the church dimly lit by flickering torch light, their sad music welling in unison from throats as rich in tone as organ pipes, sounded wild and melancholy and appropriate to the setting of a desecrated church with its flotsam of the eddies of war.

In spite of the circumstances of our confinement, and the uncertainty of its duration, neither pessimism nor depression prevailed. The French and Russians as well as ourselves felt a degree of pride for the reason of our punishment and wished God-speed to the three who had made their dash for liberty.

A week after our transfer to the church the Commandant left for Constantinople to be court-martialled. He was relieved by a low-browed baboon-like man of powerful build, whose short bow legs, heavy moustache and frowsy hair that seemed part of his brown *kalpak* that he wore, gave him a fierce and bestial appearance. Before we were fated to see the last of him two years later, we had learned to hate him for what he was—a brute, a swindler and a degenerate.

Some of the Russians, who were mostly ship's officers of Black Sea merchantmen, declared that they had heard of Bimbashi Musloun Bey before the war, and alleged that he had been something in the nature of a private executioner for Enver Pasha, which accounted for his advancement from obscurity to commissioned rank.

Fresh from the Yemen, the Siberia of the Turks, where he had been guarding Arab criminals, he signalled his appearance by announcing that anyone who attempted to escape would be shot and that an efficient guard that could shoot had arrived in Afion Kara Hissar. He also announced that the escaped officers had been retaken and that it was expected that Kut-el-Amarah (then besieged) was expected to fall to the Turks.

In partnership with the Kolassi, he made a corner in Smyrna beer, buying up, without payment, all the local supplies of this innocuous beverage, and setting up shop in the church.

It was ludicrous and Gilbertian to watch our guardians—the booted Musloun and the dull and dignified Kolassi—seated at table together (so that each might check the honesty of the other) selling stolen beer to whomsoever among their motley charges might allow his thirst to master his conscience.

Knowing the way of the Turk, we disbelieved the report of the re-capture of the escapees, but some days later we were told that their baggage had to be sent to the station to them. Thinking this might be a specious method of stealing we asked for a receipt, and sadly enough a receipt came back with a message under the signature of Stoker to the effect that they expected to be imprisoned somewhere other than Afion for about a month. Their imprisonment lasted ten months, and in an underground cell of the Turkish Inquisition—the Ministry of War at Constantinople! . . .

In August 1918 Lieut.-Commander Cochrane made a second attempt from Yoshgard, a prison camp in mountain fastnesses

near the centre of Asia Minor, and this time was successful. In company with seven other officers he crossed Asia Minor to the coast near the Gulf of Alexandretta. There they captured a Turkish patrol boat, in which they set sail to Cyprus, after travelling four hundred and fifty miles to freedom.\*

In the attempt from Afion, in March 1916, the three officers, after many arduous and exciting adventures, were taken after seventeen days' travelling, and unluckily when in sight of the coast. Their first night's journeying left them still in sight of the black rock of Afion, and through the day they lay in hiding close to a Turk shooting duck. Night overtook them once when they were in the centre of a swamp. On another occasion they were hiding by day in a cave in the mountains when a Turkish goat-herd entered. They pretended to be Germans carrying out experiments for the destruction of the prevailing locust pest; but the goat-herd informed on them in the village, his cupidity being aroused by their generosity in paying for food. They were captured by a band of ruffians, robbed of their money except a gold piece that Cochrane managed to retain, and were taken before the head man who fortunately believed their story and released them, but they were stoned from the village. They succeeded in crossing a guarded mountain pass by night during a blinding rain storm, and coming upon a river that flowed to the coast they followed its course. Unluckily it led into a narrow ravine whose steep banks prevented their travelling further, although within sight of the sea, where they hoped to seize a boat. Retracing their weary footsteps from the ravine, they sought shelter in the hut of a shepherd. After walking some miles the next morning they halted to rest and patch their broken boots with the skin of a goat, when they found they were covered by the rifles of gendarmes! The shepherd's son had become suspicious on seeing the gold lira offered to his father for the goat they had bought and had informed the local gendarmes of their whereabouts. . . .

Their gallant attempt served as an incentive to would-be escapees, and was rewarded in Cochrane's case in his ultimate escape. Poor Price, however, like many another luckless Englishman, was fated never to leave Turkey, for he died of sickness shortly before the armistice.

\* "Four Hundred and Fifty Miles to Freedom." By Captain M. A. B. Johnston and K. D. Yearsley.

After two weeks of close confinement in the church we were allowed to exercise in the tiny walled courtyard. It was pleasant to see the sky and breathe in a freer atmosphere, but our promenade ground was confined to the cramped limits of the yard and a narrow pathway about twenty yards long where the courtyard was continued along the church wall. In this space generation after generation of Armenians had been buried; some of them in pretentious tombs, others in unnamed graves and so close to the surface that their bones protruded and were soon kicked about underfoot during our perambulations.

As far as I know the only unhealthy result of this stirring up of the dust of the departed was that some of us developed sore eyes, and in my own case an inflamed eye caused me to have a one-eyed view of prison life for some months.

The church stood among the fallen boulders at the foot of the great rock of Afion Kara Hissar, which towered grim and gaunt, four hundred feet above us. Its side were almost perpendicular, but a winding and difficult path, enfiladed at many points by ancient guard houses, wound up its precipitous sides to a crumbling Seljukian castle that crowned the summit. When want of space or inclination did not allow us to exercise in the trammelled confines of the graveyard, we could sit and stare at the forbidding rock and cogitate upon its history. As time passed its immutable presence ceased to be a source of wonder and we cursed it as a merciless token of our helplessness and captivity.

The paucity of space was in many ways compensated for by the vigour of the exercise taken, and a set of boxing gloves, a very welcome present from the American Embassy,—received considerable wear and tear. Neither was culture entirely neglected, for many a schoolboy grown old sought forgetfulness and a means *pour passer le temps* in wrestling with half-forgotten French, or endeavouring to master some of the sonorous idioms of the Russian tongue.

The anniversary of the landing on Gallipoli was celebrated by a sing-song which in spite of the artificial aids to hilarity purchased from Gaolers Unlimited, lacked enthusiasm, owing to the depression caused by the reported straits of the garrison of Kut-el-Amarah.

We had discredited the Commandant's report as "bazaar

talk ", but the communiqués of the *Hilal*, a newspaper printed in French and published at Constantinople, confirmed his story. Though its leaders were even more fanatical than our own in denouncing the other side, and most of its references to the "perfidious English" as promoters of this and every other war were certainly libellous if amusing, the telegrams of the *Agence Milli* which supplied the *Hilal* with its news from the fighting fronts were substantially true.

And there we read a few days later how the little army that had fought its way almost to Baghdad from the shores of the Persian Gulf had been compelled to surrender through lack of food, after nearly five months of siege, in spite of repeated efforts for their relief. The Turkish press eulogised the heroism of the British in holding out so long and gave General Townshend due credit for his masterly retreat from Ctesiphon to Kut-el-Amarah.

Thirteen thousand men, of whom two thousand were British, were taken prisoner as the result of the capitulation. Knowing the Turk's hopeless inability to care for the few who were already prisoners, we were horrified to think of the magnitude of the tragedy that awaited these starving men, should the Turk attempt to drive them from Mesopotamia to Anatolia.

The period of melancholy and depression consequent upon the news of Kut soon passed—to be renewed on the arrival of the first starving detachment some months later—giving way to resigned acceptance of the situation and a disproportionate interest in our own comfort.

The birthday of one or other of us sufficed as a pretext for a celebration that would keep guitars and mandolins strumming till the small hours, while Russian choral glees and folk-songs to the accompaniment of grotesque dances made the rafters ring. It was an unwritten law that every guest was obliged to render an item, which however indifferent was acclaimed with a chorus that Dawes conducted with a crutch and—  
"Jolly good song, jolly well sung, jolly good company everyone.

Those that can beat it are welcome to try,

But never forget that the singer is dry. . . ."

was sung impartially after each effort.

After six weeks we were removed to houses in the town. The British were placed in four adjoining buildings that stood on the road between the railway station and the town, while



the French and Russians were moved into Armenian houses in the town itself.

Our houses were new and moderately well built, with windows overlooking the motley traffic drifting to the railway station (which, as one would expect in Turkey, was placed more than a mile from the town), while a high stone wall surmounted with broken glass enclosed a small plot of ground in rear.

During the moving, Reilly lost his flying boots, which had long been coveted by the guard, and the Commandant seized the opportunity to make a little money at the expense of the Russians. There were no windows in the house in which they were quartered, and Musloun offered to supply windows at a cost of 18 liras (16 pounds). The Russians could only with difficulty find eighteen liras between them, and though they considered the charge excessive there was no alternative. The money was paid and the windows supplied, but they discovered later that the windows had been taken from another Armenian house, from which the occupants had been driven away, and were put into place by a carpenter among the guard who dressed in mufti for the occasion.

Our four houses were two storied buildings of timber and mud, the upstairs rooms being comparatively well finished and plastered. The cook-house and guard-room occupied the ground floor, while sentries were posted at the doorway in the street and both inside and outside the stone wall.

Escape now presented really dangerous initial difficulties. The guard consisted of well-armed sailors, trained before the war by British Naval instructors, and could be trusted to shoot well, while the block of buildings was so isolated that it would be difficult to escape detection even if one were lucky enough to scale the wall unnoticed. Two or three nevertheless hoped to escape and trained ostentatiously for that purpose. As we had been told that the Kut-el-Amarah prisoners were en route for Afion, it was a moot point whether, under the circumstances, it was strictly fair to condemn them to harsh treatment in advance by making an attempt for which all ranks would be punished. In addition we expected the arrival of twenty-two officers and about a hundred men of the Worcester and Gloucestershire Yeomanry who had recently been captured during a Turkish offensive at Katia, near the Suez Canal.

A meeting was called by the senior officer (Commander

Goad) to debate the matter, and though the resolution that intending escapees should submit their plans to the senior officer (a too sweeping prerogative) was not universally approved, the genuine aspirants as well as the poseurs sportingly decided to defer attempts until we could be sure of the fate of the Kut men and the Yeomanry.

Meanwhile we commenced to make ourselves as comfortable as possible, and with planks, which profiteers in the bazaar were already raising considerably in price, we began the manufacture of forms and tables for our messes. Shukri Chaoush, a burly corporal of the military police, was one of the first to batten on us and help to raise the prices. His method was to blackmail all the shopkeepers from whom we bought for the privilege of being allowed to supply us. We complained by letter to the Commandant (who no doubt shared the proceeds), with the result that Shukri retired from the police and set up shop for himself.

Musloun and his satellites, the Kolassi and the Naval officer, must have had shares in this enterprise too, for English groceries and tobacco, sweets, and articles of clothing, the loot of parcels packed by loving hands at home, were exhibited for sale in Shukri's shop at fabulous prices. Subsequent events proved that the Naval officer was the principal shareholder of Robbery Unlimited, for when the Russians and the Naval officer were transferred to Kutiah, the shop, which could not pay under our boycott, was shortly afterwards moved to the same place.

A consignment of clothes and comforts arrived about this time from the American Embassy at Constantinople, which controlled the disbursement of a British Red Cross Fund for prisoners. The assortment was as diverse and tawdry as a pedlar's outfit, but, to some of us who for so long had not known the luxury of a shirt, the futurist garments that might have been part of Joseph's wardrobe were very welcome. In addition to anarchistic shirts there was a crash suit for each (orphan asylum cut), also a bonnet-like cloth hat—small boy's size,—that could be had lined with either heliotrope or green. Ill-fitting or clumsily altered, worn incongruously with much creased and ragged khaki, and beards *à la Russe*, our exercise ground must have looked like a playground of lunatics.

Those whose penchant was gardening had an opportunity to exercise their bent in the walled enclosure. But as this space

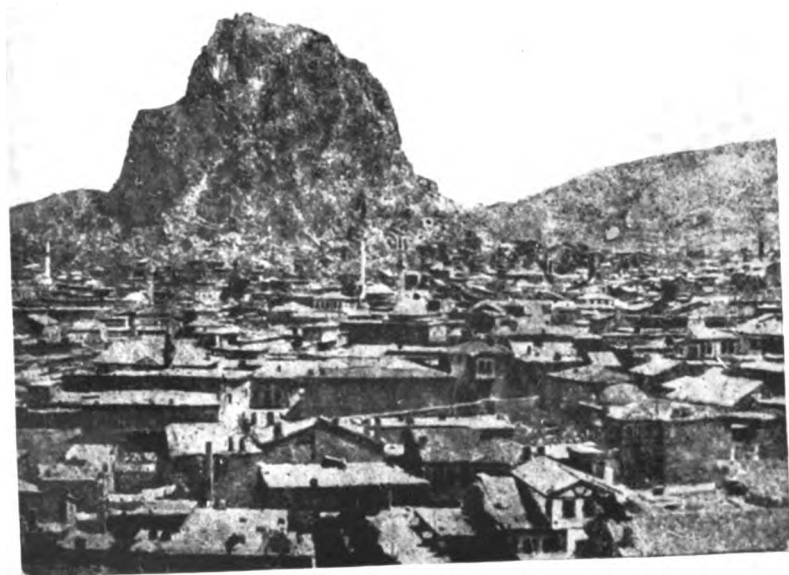
was also the exercise ground for some fifty officers and orderlies and twenty or more of our guard, conditions were not ideal. Moreover the choicest patch of green would not unusually be the scene of a spirited dog fight, while the amount of gratuitous advice and banter was a deterrent rather than a stimulus, and the gardens were soon abandoned.

Pets began to accumulate, and those who sought companionship in dogs received their full share, also inflicting it upon others. The craze had started with Paul, who some time before became possessed of a beautiful Persian greyhound. McDonald thereupon adopted a yellow mongrel of alleged aristocratic antecedents, which thrived well on frequent chastisement. Fulton purchased a rheumaticy long dog, while Tebbs took a poodle to heart. Contributions from the orderlies and the arrival of a second generation added further to the kennel, till every type of animal that could be called dog was represented. Very soon a certain uneasiness began to manifest itself in spite of assurances of owners that their dogs were verminless. Encouraged by a wager, Tebbs' poodle was seized, and after a bulletin announcing the one hundred and twenty-fourth capture had gone forth, our faith in dog owners was severely shaken. Other pets there certainly were, but they were of the harmless variety. Cary had a tortoise that he would race against any others we might find. Pass owned a baby eagle owl that ate mice or anything that came its way, and I knew a Russian that was on friendly terms with a mouse. Dog owners, who gave expensive food to useless animals when want and hunger stalked in the town, showed a selfishness, which however unwitting, they would be the first to admit now. And to the credit of most they got rid of their pets when food prices became really high. R—— was not a dog lover, and when the sudden deaths of three dogs of the twenty that yelped and fought in our little garden caused some comment, he confessed that he would not wilfully poison a dog, but that whenever he received a tin of fish in a parcel he usually kept a little for about a month, and well . . . if dogs would scavenge at dust tins they must take the consequences.

In 1908 the Young Turk party cleared the bazaars of Constantinople of the innumerable pariahs for which the Turkish capital has been so long famous. These dogs (as was still the case in Afion) lay in the meat bazaars in scores, being fed with



AT LOWER CAMP GROUP OF BRITISH PRISONERS: AFION KARA HISSAR.  
(x T. W. WHITE).



AFION KARA HISSAR.

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offal by the butchers, who never disturbed them, while the dogs themselves would not allow a strange one to approach their pitch. Owing to the ancient superstition that the souls of women enter into dogs, the animals were not humanely killed but were transported to one of the uninhabited islands of Prinkipo to starve. And personally I regretted that the last survivor, who must have been a veritable Cerberus, had not been preserved to give short shrift to his brethren at Afion.

In our diverse company were men who had sailed the seven seas; sons of soldier families dedicated for generations to the Indian Army; business men turned soldiers; men of leisure, good fellows and a few bad—but all possessed of experiences unique and rare. There were Britishers who had fought or hunted in the remotest corners of the earth, and even we eight Australians were distributed between four widely distant states. Such minds and spirits could not suddenly become inert and unproductive. Away from the unreal world of conventionality, minds previously engaged in material things, now turned to the abstract for solace. Philosophic thought and argument had ample scope to develop, with the result that hitherto dormant abilities commenced to manifest themselves, assisted by which each individual with the material at hand created a world for himself.

Though the change of life and scene did not affect all in like manner,—for the indolent and the petty are unresponsive to opportunity—it was most noticeable at the discussion of our newly founded Debating Society. This panacea for ennui was abolished by the Turks some months later as they suspected it to be the hatching ground for plots to escape. But before its demise subjects diverse and deep were debated with all the vehemence of party politics.

An asset to the circle of the debaters was the arrival of Lieut. J. A. Shannon, Highland Light Infantry, who, with another officer and about a hundred men, arrived from Mesopotamia, where they had been made prisoners while serving with the force that gallantly attempted to relieve Kut-el-Amarah. The doings of this force are almost veiled in obscurity because floods, disease and the stubbornness of the Turks did not allow them to succeed, though their losses were many times in excess of those suffered by the garrison they sought to relieve. . . . Shannon had absorbed much Bergsonian philosophy at the

Edinburgh University and had developed his natural Scotch stoicism by hardships in France and Mesopotamia, a combination which made him a silent room-mate but an eloquent debater.

In collaboration with Lieut. Rawstone, a kindred but less mature spirit, Shannon spent his days in earnest study and the writing of a ponderous philosophic treatise that ultimately found its way into print.\* "Scotty" also edited the "Afioneer", a weekly journal which—until it was suppressed by the suspicious Turk—was written by hand, with pen and ink sketches and produced echoes of camp scandal, verses that were fair and otherwise, a theatrical critique, a "caggers and arguers" column, and a serial story. Thus the literary ability that subsequently raised him to eminence in the office of "The Morning Post" first manifested itself.

Other *litterateurs* flourished in our midst. Lieut. Still, who at the outbreak of war was tea planting in Ceylon, tried a novice's hand at poetry, his prolific pen at length producing a volume of verse† which should live, if only for the insight, in blank verse, into Cingalese history. Yeats-Brown wrote the early part of his "Caught by the Turks", a book which even if somewhat fantastic and exaggerated, is an addition to the world of letters by reason of the undoubted literary ability and excellent descriptive powers of the author. Other playwrights sought to emulate Scaife. Palmer, erstwhile Vice-Consul at Chanak, and an all-round athlete who conversed fluently in six languages, developed into a writer of humorous songs.

Once-a-week lectures that took us away from the dulness of captivity were also organised, and, crammed into our largest room, which was lighted with home-made glow lamps, we learned from the men who had done these things how cocoanuts are grown in the Malay States, of Archæology in Ceylon and Turkey, of elephant hunting and Arctic exploration, of things seen on "The Road to Mandalay"—and numerous other subjects that brought bright hours into the tedious weeks.

Lest it should appear in the light of these diversions that life at Afion was a bed of roses, it should be remembered that food was dear and poor in quality. Bread was an expensive commodity that was principally remarkable for its soddenness

\* "Morning Knowledge," by Alastair Shannon.

† "Poems in Captivity," by John Still.

and the amount of straw and grit it contained. European groceries there were none, and *peckmez*, an extract from grapes that resembled molasses, was our substitute for jam and butter. Meat was a rarity and rose in price to 6/6 per lb., by which time it had ceased to be either beef or mutton and had become deceased buffalo or donkey. We had even to pay rent for the houses in which we lived and for the drinking water that was fetched from the town each day by two youths who owned a rickety cart and a doubtful-looking barrel. But for the Embassy money, a fund which was disbursed by the American Ambassador at Constantinople among all British prisoners, and which supplemented our four shillings and sixpence per day with an extra three pounds per month, we should have been unable to buy enough food. Luckily for us at this time the Economic Stores at Constantinople were allowed to accept our cheques, and many of us took the opportunity, before this source was closed to us, of laying in a store that was later mutually useful, particularly when weary new arrivals joined our ranks.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MEN OF KUT

**O**N June 29th, 1916, the first party of British officers from Kut-el-Amarah arrived, consisting of Major-Gen. Sir C. J. Mellis, V.C., second-in-command to General Townshend during the siege, and five other officers. During the five days they remained at Afion before being sent on to Angora, some of them were allowed to visit us, and told us the story of the capitulation, confirming our fears regarding the treatment of the men.

General Mellis by personal example had done much to encourage and hearten the spirits of the garrison during the siege. A dogged and resolute soldier, he had shown the same spirit of determination at Kut as he had exhibited at the battle of Shaiba, where in April 1915 he had saved Basra to the British. His spirit was undaunted by the prospect of captivity. After the fall of Kut, wherever he witnessed suffering among the men, who were making their painful way northward from Mesopotamia, he acted the part of the good Samaritan as far as he was able. At Baghdad, where 10,000 sick and exhausted men were permitted to rest for a few days after the one-hundred-mile march from Kut-el-Amarah, he raised such a storm of protest regarding the treatment meted out to them that the Commandant was relieved of his post.

At Ticret he divided his money among a large number of British and Indians who were helpless with dysentery and enteritis brought on by bad food during the siege. At Hassan Beyli in the Taurus Mountains the officers' party had seen about forty Britishers who were in an even more pitiable plight than those at Ticret. Some were without hats or boots and many were wasted to mere skeletons. The fierce summer heat had

covered their arms and legs with sores and blisters, while what clothes they possessed were in an indescribable state owing to sickness and the hardships of the march. General Mellis refused to move from Hassan Beyli until arabahs were provided for these men for the remainder of the journey across the Taurus Mountains. After a delay of some days vehicles were procured and sent ahead with the men. It was found that many of the weakest were thrown off the carts to die, and fortunate it was that the officers' party was following, for weary and sick men were picked up at intervals along the road, both by them and by Germans of the Motor Transport Service, whose general conduct and humane behaviour was a contrast to that of the Turks.\*

We listened eagerly to unique personal experiences from our guests. Our mess was mainly a Mesopotamian one and we could appreciate to the full the narration of misfortunes and hardships which had been the lot of the ill-fated Sixth Division, to which we had belonged. It is unnecessary to dilate upon the well known story of the siege and the so-nearly realised hopes of the garrison during the efforts of the relieving force. The shortage of food which at the capitulation had reduced the rations of the garrison to three ounces of bread and one and a quarter pounds of horse flesh per day, had also caused great ravages among the Arab population. Daily, Arabs lying astride inflated goatskins or pieces of wood could be seen paddling across the Tigris to the Turks. It was learned later that they received very short shrift from their co-religionists.

The sheikh of Kut, who since the capture of the town had remained unhesitatingly loyal to the British, sought every means of leaving when capitulation became inevitable. But he was fated to remain and with his son and nephew and

\* From Sandes "In Kut and Captivity" (page 310).

At Takrit on June 10th General Mellis found 192 Indian and 43 British soldiers. They had just been moved into dirty mud houses in the village, but had previously lain for days exposed to the heat and dust on the river bank. Many were dying of dysentery, enteritis, and starvation, as they could not eat the coarse bread given them, and there were practically no medical arrangements for their relief and no medicines. The plight of all the sick was truly pitiable. Very few had either blankets or boots. General Mellis did all he could for them before going on and distributed as much money as he could spare. He also sent a letter back to Khalil Pasha reporting the state of affairs. . . . and requesting that a medical officer of ours be sent there.

At Shergat on June 13th, 1916, 50 Indian and 26 British sick were found practically starving and all very ill. . . . They were continually jeered at and ill-treated by Arabs, who threw stones at them as they crawled weakly down to the river to drink. Seventeen of the men were dying from sickness and starvation. . . . These unfortunate men also received monetary relief and everything possible was done for them, though that could not account for much.

a number of Christian interpreters was hanged on the entry of the Turks into the town. About 250 Arabs were also shot in batches of six to ten. Life is cheap in the East, and Kut seemed fated to be the scene of many gruesome sights. I had seen two Arabs publicly hanged there by our own force. But these were bloodthirsty miscreants who had been caught red-handed looting and killing our wounded. The bodies that swung in the palm trees and on the water front at Kut after its capitulation must have inspired many gloomy forebodings of captivity among the starving prisoners.

Gruesome and touching sidelights on the closing days of the siege were recounted to me by Capt. Stevenson, a veterinary officer of the force. Stevenson related that numbers of ravenous soldiers descended nightly into the refuse pit where the offal of the mules killed for food was thrown, in order to search for hearts and livers that might have escaped the butcher's notice. Daily four or five men were dying of stomach troubles that were suspiciously like cholera, and as anthrax had broken out among the cattle the pit was closed to the troops. Frequent appeals on the part of the troops, however, caused it to be reopened to them and there, when off duty, these gallant soldiers, gaunt and ravenous, might be seen routing among the garbage like so many beasts of prey in endeavours to supplement their starvation rations.

The perfidiousness of the Turks was first shown to their luckless captives by their breaking of the terms of the capitulation and forcing the garrison, except officers and sick, to march the hundred odd miles from Kut to Baghdad. From Baghdad they were moved on in large parties, the officers, carefully separated from the men, being allowed two donkeys between every three of their number.

The hardships and horrors were multiplied because of the great numbers that were driven along in these pitiful, suffering columns.

Starvation and fatigue, disease and ill-treatment, steadily thinned their ranks, till the desert route from Kut-el-Amarah to Anatolia found graves for three-fourths of their number. The Indians and many of the British who survived the interminable marches to railhead at Ras-el-Ain or Bozanti were then placed on railway construction at these termini, the former in an endeavour to continue the Mesopotamian section of the

line to Mosul and those at Bozanti to work like slaves at the mighty task of tunnelling the Taurus.\*

It was not until mid-September that the first of the men of Kut arrived at Afion. Only super men could have lived through the agonies of being driven like barbarian captives of the ancients over seven hundred miles of mountain and desert. To describe these gaunt skeletons is a re-description of the men we had seen arriving at Mosul. I find the following entry in my diary, which relates to their arrival.

"Sept. 19th. About three hundred men of the Kut garrison arrived last night, and this morning I saw some of these unfortunates who had been left overnight at the station making their

\* Painful as it is to read, I quote excerpts from two other writers which show a similar state of affairs from their observation.

From Sandes' "In Kut and Captivity". The rank and file reached Bghallah on May 8th after a long march in great heat. They had had no water all day and staggered with exhaustion. . . . Any men who lagged behind were beaten with rifle butts or sticks by the Arab gendarmes. Six men who collapsed with heat stroke were abandoned by the Turks . . . and another sufferer was beaten so that he died on reaching camp. . . . Thus began the ghastly march of our rank and file to Anatolia.

The first column of our men marched from Samarra on May 22nd for Mosul. It consisted of about 3000 men. A few camels and donkeys were provided for the sick, and the escort frequently used these, so that the sick men had to walk—or die. The escort stole boots and clothing from the prisoners and many of the latter had to march in strips of blanket wrapped round their feet. . . . At Samarra another party of our men received a meat ration "before starting" for Mosul. The ration was *one goat among 400 men*. The prisoners were driven along by the escort like a herd of cattle.

Evidence of a patient in the hospital camp of Islahie and corroborated by others. "I received no medicine of any sort. My food was two table-spoonful of barley porridge in the morning and the same at night. To wash we had to creep unnoticed to a stream 200 yards away. The patients lay in Arab tents on the ground without bedding and in some cases absolutely naked, and men were dying three or four a day. . . . The dead were often laid outside the tent naked and had to be buried in the evening by the patients."

The march of our rank and file prisoners from Mosul to Ras-el-Ain was a cruel one. The prisoners proceeded in various parties, each usually commanded by an Arab officer. The escort stole the prisoners' clothes and boots, and any complaints were ignored or the complainant beaten. In not many instances were the Indian soldiers knocked about. It was the white man whom the brutal Arabs delighted to beat. "I saw, about two days before we reached Ras-el-Ain, the escort burying one of our men who . . . was moving . . . I and several other men went to help him but were driven off by the escort with loaded rifles."

A British soldier describes his experience with working parties. "On the march from Marmourie to Jabachi I saw a man hit over the head with a rifle. He dropped and died by the roadside."

From another working camp. "On arrival (at Bagtche) we were seventy-two strong, but we left the place thirty-three strong, the rest having died."

"I saw men discharged from hospital too weak to stand, and some returned the next day and died. In seven weeks in this hospital over 300 British soldiers died."

From Mousley's "Secrets of a Kuttite". (At Naisibin). A bare strip of filthy ground ran down to the river some two hundred yards off. Along the wall, protected only by a few scanty leaves and loose grass. . . . I saw some human forms which no eye but one acquainted with the phenomenon of the trek could possibly recognise as British soldiery. They were wasted to wreaths of skin hanging upon a bone frame. For the most part they were stark naked except for a rag round their loins, their garments having been sold to buy food, bread, milk, and medicine. Their eyes were white with the death hue. Their sunken cheeks were covered with the unwholen growth of weeks. One had just died and two or three corpses had just been removed. . . . The corpses had lain there for days. Some of the men were too weak to move. The result of the collection of filth and the unsanitary state in the centre of which these men lay in a climate like this can be imagined. . . . Those unable to walk had to crawl to the river for water. One could see their tracks through the dirt and grime. Three or four hard, black biscuits lay near the dead man. . . . Other forms I thought dead, but they moved unconsciously. One saw the bee-line phenomenon of flies which swarmed by the million going in and out of living men's open mouths.

way to the town. They were very wasted and weak, and when I shouted to them seemed too dazed to reply.

"They had no blankets and very few clothes and some of them had only dirty rags on their feet instead of boots. One man who seemed weaker than the others had a portion of a sack for an upper garment and a very old and delapidated pair of drawers about his legs. He was carrying a mess tin and a small calico bag, which evidently contained all his effects. These things dropped from his weak fingers as we watched him totter and fall upon his face on the road. His companions evidently only too cognisant of the treatment meted out to stragglers or because they were not strong enough to help him, staggered on their way. After a little while the fallen man rose painfully to his feet again and picking up his precious tin and bag stumbled after his comrades, swaying heavily from side to side."

A second party of forty-two arrived about three weeks later, while a third consisting of about two hundred British and Indians, which was the rearguard of the unfortunate force, arrived at Afion on October 29th. This last group was taken to the town along a road that ran parallel to the one passing our houses in order that we might not see nor hear too much. But they must have been in as deplorable a condition as the earlier arrivals, for they were straggling badly, and at the tail of the column we could see slowly moving figures dropping from exhaustion. It was pitiable to watch the progress of these last, staggering along like drunken men, stumbling and falling, being sometimes bravely helped to their feet by their comrades almost as feeble, then tottering along a few paces further before dropping to earth again. It was exasperating beyond measure not to be able to render any assistance to them.

Within a week of the arrival of the first party, twenty of them died, and an officer returning from hospital a few days later saw more of them wrapped in blood-stained rags being carried on stretchers to the burial ground by comrades almost too weak to walk.

Our senior officer was notified of the deaths of forty-six Britishers within the first three weeks, and approximately a hundred died within two months of their arrival.

On the advent of the first party I had instituted a money and clothing collection for the men, which realised a large and

assorted collection of garments as well as a sum of £80, while several of us who had commenced to receive parcels despatched the store of food we had held in readiness for that purpose and started a self-denial campaign.

An Australian medical officer attached to the Gloucester Yeomanry, who had been attending sick at Aleppo, had been permitted to continue his humane work at Afion. This officer, Lieut. J. Brown, was horrified and disgusted at the condition of the men from Kut, most of whom were suffering from fever and dysentery, in addition to being starved and utterly exhausted. He worked untiringly and did much to ameliorate their lot in the face of brutal opposition from the Turks, and unintelligible apathy on the part of our two senior British officers, to whom Brown frequently but unavailingly appealed to make vigorous protests against the medical attention and food which the men received in hospital.

Daily we saw melancholy processions of feeble stretcher-bearers who seemed at the point of death themselves, carrying coffinless dead to the Armenian cemetery. The following diary entries describe the frequency of these sights. "Oct. 7th, 1916. We saw a party of Tommies carrying on stretchers the bodies of three of their comrades wrapped in sheets to a cemetery about a mile from the hospital. Oct. 9th. Crossing the fields in front of our houses we saw another solemn procession of emaciated men carrying four more gruesome white objects to the burial ground." And again on Oct. 11th. "Yet another burial party was seen to-day, and as those we have seen were noticed purely by chance, it is quite possible that every day the death occurs of some of these brave fellows, who have already suffered so much and who, because they are unlucky enough not to possess stars on their shoulder-straps, receive treatment considerably inferior to ours."

Those who during the war "waited, profited, trembled and cheered" should congratulate themselves upon what they did not lift a finger to remedy.

All Brown's efforts, the timely arrival of Embassy money, and a weekly collection taken up in our camp to buy milk or eggs for the sick, sufficed little for so many.

Brown's outspokenness about their neglect led to the Turks placing him on the same footing as other officers, in that he was no longer allowed to visit the men nor speak to them should

they meet by chance. The result was that from that time onwards till about March 1918 the men were left for medical treatment to the tender mercies of a renegade Indian Musselman of the Subordinate Medical Service, Fasel Achmed. This man, who together with a few others of his countrymen, put his own comfort before his duty to his country, had permission thereafter to do as he chose and besides making a pretence of attending to the soldiers he set up in private practice in the town, while both he and his orderly acted as go-betweens and informers for the Turks. I believe this traitor received a fitting punishment after the war, while a hearty beating which we inflicted upon his spying orderly when out of the reach of his friends the sentries should suffice for his lesser misdeeds.\*

I was anxious about the men of the Flying Corps, particularly those who had come with me from Australia. We knew that a second Flight had arrived from England soon after our capture, and we had learned from the officers' party from Kut that many of the Flying Corps mechanics had been left in the town, besides two pilots, Capt. Wells, who was in charge of aircraft stores at our advanced base at Kut, and Capt. Winfield-Smith, one of the pilots of the newly-arrived "B" Flight.

All were agreed that the mechanics under the leadership of Capt. Winfield-Smith had done yeoman service during the siege in erecting and running the mills for grinding barley, in making bombs and in repairing river craft which suffered considerably from the enemy's fire.

Communication with the men at Afion was difficult. Although the Turks would deliver the parcels we sent to the men, they would not tolerate any exchange of communication. A party of about twelve Australian Light Horse and some New Zealand Mounted Rifles, who with a New Zealand lieutenant had been captured while on outpost duty, had arrived from Palestine shortly before the first of the Kut men, and with

\* Sandes' "In Kut and Captivity" records the following regarding hospital treatment at Afion Kara Hissar (page 372):

"One soldier states:—In hospital . . . I saw many weakly men knocked about by the Turkish orderlies simply because they were too weak to attend to themselves. I saw this happen to a Q.M.S., who died within a few days of the beating. I saw about half-a-dozen men receive an injection from a Turkish doctor. This was done about 9 p.m. and in every case the man was dead next morning."

From another source comes the following:—"I was put in a room with another prisoner who had lost an article of his kit. I was suffering from fever. The other man's hands were tied together, so I undid them, with the result that I got a beating and both of us had our hands tied. The beating was inflicted by a Turkish hospital orderly and was so severe that I lost consciousness and remembered nothing more till I awoke next morning, when my hands were still tied . . . and were not untied till the following morning."

these men we kept up a surreptitious correspondence by an interchange of notes between the orderlies of our shopping party and members of the men's party when they met in the bazaar. But we learned nothing definite from this source until the arrival of the officers' party from Kut.

This party was detained at Afion owing to the recent transfer of all Russian officers to Kutieh. With them came Air-Mechanic Snell, who had survived the march mainly because he had been adopted by an officer as an orderly and frequently got a lift on a horse. Nevertheless he was a mere shadow, footsore and sick, with a severe cut on his head. He was a member of "B" Flight, and informed me that thirty-nine N.C.Os. and mechanics remained in Kut during the siege, the remainder leaving the town before it was invested. Of these thirty-nine, though some were wounded during the siege, none were killed, yet all but six died in the march.

Air-Mechanic Hudson, one of the two survivors of the nine Australians in the siege, arrived with the third batch of Kut prisoners. He managed to have a note conveyed to me through one of the shopping party, stating that he had just been discharged from hospital, had no boots, and was in a very weak state. I had a lira (18/-) which I had saved for such an emergency, and raising another from amongst my Australian brother officers, I sent them to him with what clothes I could spare from a scanty wardrobe, together with a parcel of tinned food. Meanwhile he had received an issue of Embassy clothes and boots that had just reached the men and next day called at our camp with a party carrying some newly-arrived parcels. The change in his appearance was very evident, and he was very thin and sick. We were prevented from talking, but nevertheless I managed to converse by facing in a different direction as if speaking to someone else. He had had a very rough time, as the following entries in a report written later by him will show. I was glad that with the new parcels and a thorough whip round among my friends I was able to send him a further parcel of food-stuffs as well as a blanket.

Regarding the journey between Baghdad and Afion the following excerpts from Hudson's report will serve to show what the men of Kut endured:—

"I belonged to the second last party to leave Baghdad. We left in June. As ours was a sick party we were told we would



receive better treatment. Our next halt (after Samara) was at Ticret, which was a thirty-five-mile march, which we did in one stretch from 5 o'clock one afternoon till 11.30 a.m. next day. Sick men and men with sore feet came slowly in till the evening. We were placed in the hospital (so-called) but were attacked and stoned by the Arab women and children of the town. The Commandant of the town said he would not be responsible for our safety and we must go, though the British officer with us had told him that many of our number were unfit to move. Some were sent back by raft to Samara and the others went on. I went on . . . The next march was a short one of twenty-two miles, but the road was very hilly, and as so many were weak it took us some time to get there, just how long I do not remember—not even the name of the place. But we were told that we were to be careful of the food issues. On account of the weak state of most of the boys it was five days instead of three before we got to the next town. The rations for this trip of sixty miles were six biscuits, two lbs. of atta (coarse flour), one cake of bread, or two and a half lbs. of whole barley. Many of the boys sold part of what clothes, boots and blankets they possessed to the Arab guards during the march. But it was a case of dire necessity . . . The guards had ample supplies and they also sold the fresh water that they carried on their horses. During this march *twenty-seven men dropped out to die* through weakness caused by hunger and thirst. I know of three who went mad, and the guard knocked them out with rifle butts and then *half buried them under the sand*”.

Hudson regarded the “eleven to thirteen days’ march from Mosul to Ras-el-Ain as the worst for actual suffering.” Each man was allowed a quart of water for the two days’ march across one waterless stretch; and as many of the men could not restrain the desire to drink on account of the intense heat a great number died. “How many died,” the report continues, “I do not know, but the total must have been very large.” He was bootless for a great part of the journey, his boots having been stolen. “But,” continues this stoic, “I believe this was an advantage as many men had sore feet through the sand getting into their boots.” Forty to fifty men were crammed into each railway truck for the first two stages of the railway journey from Ras-el-Ain to Afion. “Most of the day and all night,” says the report, “the doors of these closed trucks were

kept locked, and as almost every man was suffering from fever, dysentery and diarrhœa, the state of affairs can be imagined. . . After three days and nights of such travelling, five men in my wagon were found to be dead when the doors were opened, and some of the other wagons were just as bad as ours." Twenty to thirty men died as a result of this train ride.

"The food issued for this journey was half cooked barley and rye bread, or hard biscuits, and if a man could not eat it he had to go without."

And much more that is atrocious and revolting might be written regarding the barbarities practised upon these helpless men, whom the unscrupulous Enver Pasha had hypocritically termed "honoured guests of the Sultan."\* What Air-Mechanic Hudson experienced was also suffered by every man in the garrison. For the sake of the men who paid the supreme sacrifice in the desert marches in Mesopotamia and for those they held most dear, I count it a duty and a privilege to put on record the true facts of their heroism and martyrdom.

Lieut. Woolley, the renowned archæologist, who has recently become world famous for his discoveries at Ur, when a prisoner in Turkey during the war, wrote a poem entitled "The Road-makers", the following stanzas of which eloquently describe what the men of Kut endured:—

"Famished and spent across the waste, beastlike you drove us  
on,

And clubbed to death the stragglers by the way,  
Our sick men in the lazar huts you left to die alone,  
And you robbed the very dying as they lay.

Naked and starved we built you roads and tunnelled through  
your hills,

And you flogged us when we fainted at our work.  
Fevered beneath the sun we toiled, wracked by the winter  
chills,

Till death released us, kindlier than the Turk.

\* In a speech to British officer prisoners at Mosul shortly after the fall of Kut, Enver Pasha, the Turkish Minister of War, declared that while in Turkish hands they would be treated as *Precious and Honoured Guests of the Ottoman Government*. We ironically endeavoured to conjecture what a prisoner-of-war's treatment would be like. It is interesting in this regard to remember that the Turkish for "slave" and "prisoner" is the same word, *Esir*, and undoubtedly the men were treated as slaves. The officers' treatment, owing to the Turks' respect for rank, differed in that they were guarded well, but neglected, owing to apathy, incompetence, and a dislike of responsibility. In many ways his Asiatic mind is the mind of a child. He takes no thought of the morrow, and desires a calm, comfortable and indolent existence. H. O. Mousley. "Secrets of a Kuttite."

And the tunnels that we drove for you, the roads that we  
have made

Shall be highways for the armies of your foe.

We shall mock you in our graves, that in what we did as  
slaves

We helped, we too, to work your overthrow.

Corporal J. Sloss, the only other survivor of the Australian mechanics, did not arrive in Afion till April of the following year, when he came with a small party of sick. During a conversation between their guards and our sentries, the party halted under our windows and I recognised his voice as he answered some query from one of our houses. Cheery as ever, in appearance he was greatly altered, wearing a pair of dark glasses which he had somehow obtained, to cover an inflamed eye. He was greatly surprised to see me, and all the *yussaks* (forbidden) of the guard did not prevent a shouted dialogue that ended only when his party was out of sight. Next day I sent him a parcel of foodstuffs and some clothing donated by a room-mate, addressing it for delivery per the favour of the Commandant. Under the paper wrapping of some well-concealed chocolate I enclosed a microscopically-written note giving him the local news and asking for information regarding his comrades.

The parcel was returned to me a few days later, with the information that there was no such man in the town. By persistent assertion that I had seen Sloss, the camp interpreter eventually delivered the parcel. A letter of thanks reached me later, and a note characteristic of the man, through the medium of the bazaar shopping party. Sloss was never a pessimist, and his note, while it was full of sympathy for his deceased comrades, made light of his own misfortunes.

Leaving a hospital at Samara, where he felt he was fated to die of neglect if he remained, he joined another party of British prisoners that was passing through the town. One of these men told me afterwards that Sloss tied his wrist to the back of a cart so that he could not drop out during the march. Near Bozanti he was placed on railway construction work, from whence he soon made a gallant attempt to escape in company with three others.

After two weeks' arduous travelling in mountainous country



AUSTRALIAN OFFICER PRISONERS. AFION KARA HISSA.

*Back row, Left to Right:* LIEUT. L. H. LUSCOMBE, LIEUT. S. R. JORDON, LIEUT. W. ELSTON,  
LIEUT. BROWN.

*Front row, Left to Right:* LIEUT. C. VAUTIN, CAPT. T. W. WHITE, LIEUT. W. H. TRELOAR.





they reached the coast near Alexandretta. No friendly ship awaited them nor could they steal one, therefore, after waiting about the coast for three days, and running short of food, they were forced to give themselves up.

The following paragraph from a report which Sloss submitted to me some time later shows the mettle of this Australian :—

“ *Re escape.* Left Enselly with three English boys, carrying as much bread as we could. Crossed two ranges before reaching the coast (Gulf of Alexandretta). Lived on bread and water. Compelled to give up; bread ran out. Sent to Adana to civil prison. Caught typhus there. Released after three and a half months.”

Yet even the terrors of a Turkish civil prison (which is many times worse than a military one) did not daunt him. He received practically no medical attention and was delirious and raving during much of the time, yet somehow he survived with nothing worse than a much impaired eye. After a very brief stay at Afion Kara Hissar he was again sent to Bozanti to “ build the roads and tunnel through the hills.”

Being a skilled engineer he was placed in one of the work-shops where German motor cars were repaired and was soon given a good deal of authority. Sloss learned to apply the “ go slow policy ” in a manner that any advanced unionist might envy. It took three months to overhaul two cars, yet during that time Sloss and the men with whom he worked seemed at all times to be busy. But the hammering that sounded so well from without was mainly connected with the manufacture of a boat. The lesson of the three days spent on the shores of the Gulf of Alexandretta vainly searching for a craft had convinced Sloss of the necessity of building a portable boat for the next attempt. A party of British sailors, ratings from sunken submarines, had attempted to escape some time before and had stolen hammers, saws, ropes, bolts and nails from the work-shop in order to build a raft whereon they hoped to negotiate the sixty-mile sea voyage to Cyprus. Unfortunately they were apprehended in the Taurus before reaching the coast, being rounded up by gendarmes who mistook them for deserters from the Turkish Army.

Sloss' working bee consisted of two fellow Australians of the 14th Battalion, captured on Gallipoli, Corp. Kerr and

Private Beattie, two French sailors and two Britishers, while a second boat was being constructed by another party of Britishers.

In both cases the boat was collapsible and constructed of a framework of iron covered with canvas that was well oiled and tarred. Corp. Kerr, who had been placed in charge of a considerable quantity of stores, saw that a suitable covering was appropriated for the purpose. The framework of Sloss' boat was made of hoop-iron taken from old barrels which were laboriously bent to a channelled shape by the plotters. When erected, the boat measured twelve feet by three feet, with a beam of four feet three inches, and in this frail craft, which had first to be carried in pieces seventy miles to the coast, the determined men hoped to reach Cyprus. Unfortunately, before their plans were ripe, Sloss had a difference with one of the Germans at the camp and was sent to Afion to be punished. Hearing that he was confined at the Madrisseh (a ramshackle school used for quartering prisoners) I applied for him to act as an orderly in the officers' camp. There I met him in the winter of 1917, for once disconsolate because he realised the time was drawing near for the attempt, and that in all probability the party would have to leave without him. He was eventually sent back, but the others had grown weary of waiting and some of them actually had reached the coast and erected their boat, only to be caught once more before launching it.

Most of the Indians of the Kut-el-Amarah garrison were kept at Ras-el-Ain for the extension of the railway from that town to Mosul. Their fate was as piteous as that of the Britishers. Much has been said about their unfaithfulness in captivity, but the failings of a small minority who were inveigled with threats and bribery by co-religionists among the enemy to forget their loyalty, is compensated a thousand times by the unswerving loyalty and stoicism of the mass of these men under the almost intolerable conditions.

During their first winter at Ras-el-Ain they were given no shelter of any kind and hundreds of them who lay down nightly almost naked died of cold and disease brought on by exposure.

Few Indians other than those of the party to which I belonged were brought to Afion, though the bones of Britishers

were left in many towns throughout Asia Minor, where for any conceivable purpose working parties were required.

Bozanti and the mountain villages among the Taurus was the scene of British labours, though Angora, a hotbed of typhus, Changri, Sivas and Afion had their working parties as well. Officer prisoner camps were situated at Kastamouni, Broussa, Yoshgard and Afion, the Indian officers being quartered at Eski Shehir.

An attempt was made to undermine the loyalty of the Musselmen among the officers of this last camp by the presentation of swords from the Sultan. Acceptance of these presents from the head of their faith thus giving them a flattering precedence over British officers was tantamount to disloyalty, yet he would be a daring man indeed and a heretic who would have the moral courage to refuse the gift, putting service to the British flag before allegiance to his spiritual head. . . . Yet they were strong enough to resist, and some were in consequence sent to Afion to be punished. . . . And I can see them still—tall, silent men in flowing puggarees, more worthy of the Empire to which they belonged than many a Celt or Anglo-Saxon—tramping the narrow confines of their exercise ground, under the leadership of their herculean Afridi Senior Officer, Risseldar Kittab Guhl.



## CHAPTER XV

### STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE

A SUPERFICIAL glance at this chapter would lead the casual reader to suppose that the life of a prisoner in Turkey coincided with the comforting opinion held by armchair critics during the war,—that captivity meant a happy relief from the dangers of the firing-line. Certain it is that the risks were greatly minimised in captivity, but it is an undoubted fact that almost any prisoner would willingly have exchanged the monotony and seeming endlessness of captivity for active service.

Whatever the risks, freedom compensates for them. Dealing with captivity in retrospect, distractions which we were permitted to enjoy at intervals bridge the æons of ennui which make the life of a prisoner so unendurable. It was the distraction of reading, of taking part in or watching poor attempts at plays, of games and walks and all the diversions of mind or body which momentarily gave a sense of freedom, that kept us sane.

Many a man has written from captivity that he was well treated (the censor would see that he did not write otherwise), or has related some pleasing diversion in detail, so that his message might bring a ray of happiness to anxious relatives at home. Yet by so doing he more than accomplished his purpose, for at the same time he unwittingly stimulated a false appreciation of his enemies in the public mind.

Captivity in this obscure Turkish town seemed an eternity as it dragged its unknown length along. The exhaustion of every possible topic of conversation, petty jealousies and quarrels, the absence of feminine society, and the circumscribed outlook and sameness of the company and surroundings, com-

bined to make the time unbearably dull, quite apart from any physical discomforts.

Instinctively we turned to books as the cure-all for captivity and its sordid littleness. There was less inducement for the Turk to steal books than food parcels, so that we soon accumulated a considerable library, which friends at home and beneficent societies such as the British Prisoners of War Book Scheme so kindly sent us. Books, both grave and gay, technical, historical and political, language primers, novels and verse, were there to suit all tastes.

Personally I found great satisfaction in the voluminous pages of Gibbon and a study of the ancient civilisations of the Middle East. "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" was rarely on the library shelves, for time is a necessity for the assimilation of its detailed history, while its ponderous pages were of an added interest, relating as they did so much classic ground that we ourselves had trod. It would be interesting to know if any Englishman has exceeded the record of Commander Fabre, one of the French submarine commanders, who read each and every volume no less than six times. Other favourites naturally were books of Eastern travel, where, engrossed in their pages we could travel with medieval Maunderville and Marco Polo, or appreciate the more modern sentiments of a Kinglake or a Palgrave. . . . I recollect inbibing a deal of stoic philosophy and stimulating optimism by reading the adventures of Baron Trenck. One would suppose that the morbid adventures of this unfortunate, who survived ten years in a dungeon in chains, would have induced a certain amount of depression and melancholy in the reader. On the contrary, I blessed the unknown sender of the book for bringing the egotistical Baron's adventures to my notice, for I realised how much better our condition was than his and how little reason we had for complaint in the circumstances.

Similarly, I noticed that those who read only the lightest fiction, or who had no penchant in particular, were frequently "melancholy Jacques" of the company, their sudden transition from the Elysian fields of make-believe to the sudden realisation of such mundane things as bugs and Turks trying their patience sorely.

A book that proved to be an excellent aid to sanity and a veritable time killer was a collection of political Pros and

Cons. Our debating society having been forcibly suppressed, a room-mate and I decided to practise our eloquence upon each other. Lieut. Joe Roberts, R.N.R., a sturdy Yorkshireman and salt of salts, who was wounded and taken prisoner during a minor landing operation near Budrum, was our one faithful supporter, the others seeking refuge elsewhere. In the words of a cynical comrade "two of the officers took themselves as future Public Men so seriously that they used to practise elocution on each other, each in turn suffering himself to be addressed by the other as 'gentlemen'."\*

Roberts, whose experiences before the mast would have satisfied the most adventurous, wore sea boots on all occasions, and had a never-failing occupation in embroidering ships upon anything that resembled cloth. Our house, like all Turkish houses, was rich in cupboards, and in order to annoy the other inmates as little as possible the speaker stood in the cupboard and vigorously harangued his opponent, as well as the unoffending sailor (who acted the part of rabid hecklers), as if all the votes of Hull depended on the result.

But it was to the immortal bard of Avon that we were forever grateful.

Shakespearian readings, by the light of flickering glow lamps, were continued for many months long after my room-mate and I were transferred to another camp. There were no Irvings or Macreadys in our diverse circle, and to a critical audience the soft murmurings of Juliet to the hushed garden and the sonorous rhetoric and grandeur of the tortured Lear would certainly have lost their wonder and beauty; but however crudely given, the incomparable lines held us to the exclusion of all prison thoughts, and we lived in Rome, in Venice, in Athens or in that "precious stone set in the silver sea", at the will of the dramatist.

Until the arrival of the men from Kut, when we put a check upon useless expenditure, we had enjoyed a theatrical season. Dramas, melodramas, burlesques and pantomimes were staged in quick succession upon the rough proscenium built of sundry timber by two prisoner architects. An American organ was discovered in a hardware store in the town. Negotiations were made for its purchase (on the time payment system), and eventually it was delivered at our camp on the back of an

\* "A Prisoner in Turkey," by John Still.

aged porter, whom one would have supposed to be almost too decrepit to drag his own weight along.

Musical shows from that time onwards were frequently produced. Musicians and others tried their hands at composing, and the custodian of the organ, Capt. H. P. Dyson (Yorkshire Regt.), one-time Life Guardsman and veteran of many wars, after vainly endeavouring to guard the instrument against pseudo-players of popular airs, developed thereafter into a skilful and painstaking one-man orchestra as well as a competent church organist. Later Major Sandes, with a violin acquired in Yushgard, became the leader of our orchestra, and from memory produced the orchestral scores of several Gilbert and Sullivan operas, in addition to much classical music.

There was no paucity of playwrights and critics—especially the latter—and plays good, bad and indifferent were produced for the writers by the indefatigable Scaife with casts that in the majority of cases had never before given a thought to acting. Scaife's own plays were mostly melodramatic, but revues, vaudeville and musical comedy had their place and varied from fantastic flights by Yeats-Brown and a Greco-Ragtime comedy by Reilly, to topical farces written by Haggard or Palmer.

About a year after their escape Stoker and Cochrane returned to Afion Kara Hissar before being ultimately sent off to Yushgard. In "Straws in the Wind" Stoker graphically describes their ten months' confinement, including long periods of "solitary" in bug and rat-infested cells in Constantinople. When he returned to Afion, Stoker had somehow acquired a guitar which he played delightfully to songs of his own composing. A cheerful and lovable Irishman and an optimist always, he early showed signs of that histrionic ability that caused him to forsake a brilliant career in the Navy for the stage, when he wrote, sang, and played for the "shows" that did so much to lighten interminable hours.

The Turk is inordinately fond of "fantasies"—as he calls all manner of indoor entertainment from Punch and Judy shows to Grand Opera. As he has the habit of celebrating at *Bairam*, the festive season following the fast of *Ramazan*, he appreciates the celebrating instinct in others. We had only to mention that it was Smith Effendi's (or any other Effendi's) birthday,—

\* "Straws in the Wind," by H. G. Stoker, D.S.O., R.N.

a *Bairam* that demanded celebration—and we were allowed to hold our entertainment, though a certain amount of care was necessary to ensure that no Effendi had several birthdays in the year.

Musloun Bey, whose bestial instincts and cruelties had not yet been made manifest, but whom we had already unanimously branded as a rogue and a ruffian, attended many of these shows in company with his staff. His interpreter, an unctuous Cypriote, evidently interpreted only what was seemly for his ear, for although there was often much that was uncomplimentary to Turks in general and Musloun in particular, Mr. Miserable (Musloun Bey) heartily enjoyed the shows.

Aided by inadequate lighting, our blondest blondes, arrayed in the very creditable frocks which Capt. McDonald made from sundry clothes and patches, were passable imitations of the dashing heroines or designing adventuresses they were represented to be. Wigs made from goat hair, cleverly designed by Private Porter, a wig maker by profession, who had had an unparalleled experience before being taken prisoner on Gallipoli\*, further aided their looks, and his bountiful beards and flowing moustachios (when properly hung) converted beardless boys into fearsome villains or paternal patriarchs.

One of the best of our topical plays was a farce by Haggard entitled “The Pessimist’s Dream”, which, though only a short finale after a programme of vaudeville, was heartily appreci-

\* Private S. A. Porter, 8th Hants Territorials, who during his captivity served as an orderly in No. 4 House in the officers’ camp at Afion Kara Hisar, gave me the following facts regarding his capture. I have seen the various wounds that he received, and have reason to believe his story to be true in every detail. (He also had two brothers taken prisoner in Kut, one of whom died as a result of his treatment.) Pte. Porter was a signaller in advance of the leading platoon on the day of the big advance on August 8th, 1915, at Suvla Bay. Portion of a shell struck him, carrying away a large portion of the right buttock. After freeing himself from a field telephone which he carried, he roughly bandaged the wound and commenced to crawl back to some cover, but before reaching it he lost consciousness through loss of blood. When he regained consciousness the attack was over, and he heard enemy voices close at hand. Soon afterwards a Turkish soldier approached and finding him still alive struck him many times on the head with the edge of a shovel, inflicting severe gashes that rendered him unconscious. (These blows left long depressions in Porter’s skull.) Once more regaining his senses, he found himself lying on his face and heard a Turk approach, load his rifle, and while standing near his feet, fire point blank at his head. The bullet struck him in the back of the neck, gouging out a wound at least four inches long and coming out below his left ear. He was again left for dead, but a party of Turkish soldiers on seeing him move bayoneted him no less than twelve times. One thrust went through his arm, another made a bad wound in the stomach, a third punctured his cheek, while the remainder were scattered over various other parts of his body. Fortunately for him the Turkish bayonets were of the old-fashioned pointed variety, or recovery would have been impossible. He again lost consciousness but woke to find a more humane party of Turks were taking him to a dressing station. Nevertheless they made him walk with a rope tied round him, which they jerked whenever he stumbled. Though he was a diminutive little fellow he miraculously recovered and quickly,—his most painful memories being the dressing of his wounds without chloroform, while being held down by burly wardsmen. Although his wounds when healed could be plainly seen he found them only a slight inconvenience, so much so that when we were allowed to play football he proved himself a dashing outside right!

ated, principally because the laugh was against ourselves. The scene was laid in the exercise ground at Afion Kara Hissar fifty years hence. The ramshackle windlass over the well from which we drew our washing water was portrayed in miniature with other backyard properties for local colour. In the foreground is seated a bevy of old veterans, who, in spite of profuse whiskers, which Porter had made with a liberal hand, could be recognised as well known characters in the Prison Camp. With wheezy voices they discuss bazaar rumours, while Dawes strives to find an audience for one of his oft-repeated adventures in India and China. A diversion is created by the sudden entry of a new prisoner, a Boy Scout (Capt. Entwhistle), who has been captured during a Turkish invasion of England. He proves to be a grandson of Dawes and gladdens the heart of the old man because he has never heard his grandfather's adventures before. Some parcels of spectacles, false teeth and ear trumpets arrive with rattles for all over eighty, and advice of bath chairs to follow. There is great jubilation over the parcels, but much to their disgust, while they are trying spectacles and ear trumpets, the Turkish Commandant enters and informs them that the war is ended and that they must leave in a week's time. Having thoroughly settled down to life in Afion, they see all kinds of difficulties in such a speedy departure. One of them is expecting a parcel, another has forgotten his home address, and they point out that it may be months or even years before they are ready to leave. Finally they defiantly stump off singing Dawes' "We won't be bothered about."

Unfortunately for these cheery players, poor Dawes, who enjoyed a joke against himself, died of typhus in Constantinople after stoically bearing his wounds during two years of captivity, while Entwhistle, our hero in almost every play, died of influenza shortly after the armistice, when he was within a few days of home.

Once the soldiers at the church found life bearable again, those who through real or imagined infirmities were not sent off with working parties, began to develop their histrionic abilities. As their efforts provided entertainment for himself, Musloun Bey seized a piano from some unfortunate Armenian in the town, which enabled the Tommies to have plenty of music even if they had sometimes to enjoy it with empty stomachs.

At Christmas Musloun so unbent that we were permitted

to attend a concert at the church, where we were kept in the gallery and given strict injunctions not to talk to any of the men. Nevertheless I thought the opportunity of obtaining information about the men of the Flying Corps too good to miss, so borrowing a cap similar to those worn by the men I spent the evening downstairs, where from Hudson and others I was able to learn much concerning the general conditions and some details of the fate of the missing.

Games also proved to be an aid to forgetfulness, but there were many drawbacks, for the Turk is no sportsman, and games outside the precincts of our walled courtyard were allowed only at the whim of our custodians, when the state of Musloun's liver allowed.

Since the departure of the Russians for Kutieh, a second British officers' camp had been formed in Afion. A cricket match between the two camps was mooted, and Musloun being in Constantinople, his deputy the Kolassi was asked to grant the necessary permission. Much to our surprise and amusement we were told that we might play, *but on different grounds*. When it was explained that if we were to play a match we must of necessity be on the same ground, after much demur permission was granted but with the stipulation that *members of different camps must not speak to each other*.

Other games had to be improvised, and whether they were chess or "boo-froo" we had to create the necessary paraphernalia. Major H. A. Brett, Worcesters, who, in spite of the disability of having lost an eye before the war had wangled his way into the Army and risen from the ranks to the command of his battalion before being taken prisoner on Gallipoli, was our most capable exponent of what ingenuity may accomplish in this respect. The same spirit that overcame physical infirmities caused him to scorn the lack of tools or materials. He commenced by making a small bellows and charcoal forge, after which followed chisels, hammers and punches manufactured from old files and odd bits of steel that he bought from our guards. Portion of an antiquated sewing machine was converted into a lathe, upon which, among other things, he turned some admirable chessmen, while pocket knives, ingenious lamps evolved from cigarette tins designed to burn a minimum of poppy-seed oil, some useful furniture, and a sundial mounted on a well chiselled stone pedestal that adorned

a corner of our yard were the fruit of his fertile brain and busy hands. . . . The folding chair, with string seat and back, which he made me, I shall remember as if it had been the Sultan's most luxurious divan, so acceptable was it after the ground, which had been my only seat for so long.

But "boo-froo" was the universal recreation. We possessed four tennis racquets that had been sent to the first arrivals at Afion by the American Ambassador. With neither the space for the court nor the necessary balls they were useless until one of the officers made a net, and with tennis balls made from superannuated socks tightly sewn, we played a plagiarised badminton that came to be known as "boo-froo".

When walks were permitted we left the dust and barrenness of the courtyard to struggle over swamps and grassy fields towards a horizon near which seemed freedom. In the summer the poppy fields from which Afion takes its name,—Afion (opium), Kara Hissar (black tower)—stretched out on every hand in blazes of white patched with purple. When the poppy petals have fallen, bands of trousered peasant women cut incisions round the seed pods, and, after the whitish opium that exudes has hardened and blackened, the pods are harvested, the opium collected and the superfluous seeds baked. Oil is pressed from them, which is used for cooking and lighting purposes, the residue being then made into cakes for cattle food.

Away from the poppy fields great banks of cornflowers blotched the wheat fields with vivid blue, hollyhocks nodded above dog-roses, and orchids hid in the rocks. At a distance the Black Rock lost its grimness. Our sailor guards were the only symbol of our captivity, and in rustic surroundings away from the sordidness of it all we felt in harmony with nature.

Afion Kara Hissar is situated in the heart of the ancient province of Phrygia, in the centre of the plateau of Anatolia. The buskined peasants, with baggy trousers and embroidered zouaves, scratch the soil in the same prehistoric way as Abraham did, with oxen or buffalo yoked to a wooden plough. The land is neither harrowed nor rolled, but after ploughing a heavy beam is dragged across the furrows to break the clods, while harvesting is performed in an equally primeval manner. Reapers and binders are unknown, and after the crop is cut with scythe and sickle by women, boys and old men, it is stacked



and then threshed by driving oxen drawing sleighs continually over it. Sharp flints are fitted into the underside of the sleighs and many days of treading the corn result in its being cut into fine particles. It is then winnowed by forking it into the air on a windy day, which separates straw from grain, a laborious process making harvesting last many weeks.

Twice we were permitted to climb the steep and rugged Black Rock to the ruined castle on its summit. Within the perimeter of the mouldering walls that crown the top and perch on its precipitous edge, the peak rises to a natural look-out, where, on rocks recessed for catapults and other engines of bygone days, we could search the empty Anatolian plain in an attempt to visualise the pageant of nations that had marched to conquest or disaster within its shadow.

Although I know of no record to this effect, it is possible that the Black Tower is the castle which according to Xenophon was built by Xerxes on a precipitous rock in this vicinity.

The rock must have looked down on many invading armies, situated as it is between the Eastern and Western Empires, and ancient coins—dating from Alexander to Heraclius—were unearthed in the neighbourhood and sold to us by enterprising youngsters.

On our second visit to the castle I carried out some amateur excavating. Having observed some German officers at the castle a few weeks earlier and discovering a hole which they had evidently dug, I decided to utilise their efforts by delving deeper with the only available implements—a stick and a broken tile. The fruits of my labour were a meerchaum token that might have been Hittite, so barbaric was it, and some broken pottery which from its glazed and painted surface resembled the Greek. There was also a layer of about six feet of human bones beneath a rough stone stairway whose course I was anxious to explore and under which lay a strata of rotting millet seed, which led me to the conclusion that I was plundering the larder of some departed spirit.

After my room-mate and I were transferred to the Town Camp walks were given an added interest owing to more cosmopolitan company. Prisoners, principally aviators, arrived from various fronts, besides forty Russians who were to be strafed because four of them had made a plucky attempt to escape from Kutieh. Unlike the Ukranian merchantmen who had

been with us in the church, these Russians belonged to various fighting units. Chief among them was Colonel Prince Constantine Avaloff, a fiery little cavalryman, who had once been Captain in the Czar's bodyguard, had fought and been wounded on every Russian front, and was ultimately wounded and taken prisoner while endeavouring to reach beleaguered Kut-el-Amarah with a Russian cavalry column that crossed Persia from the Caucasus.

With no beneficent societies to send them comforts, the Russians were in a sorry plight, but suffered stoically, and with the generosity that seems inborn in the educated among them, shared what little they possessed with their friends.

Football, on the occasions we were permitted to play, had a rare international touch, and soccer as interpreted by players from Tiflis to Bombay with occasional enthusiastic Frenchmen as aggressive novices, was full of incident, the star turn being the acrobatic feat of one of the Russians, who instead of facing the ball when kicking would unexpectedly drop upon his hands and make wild donkey kicks, which, much to our surprise, were sometimes successful.

Even the hostile demonstrations sometimes associated with football were not lacking, for on our way to and from the football field we were pelted with stones and rubbish by the Turkish children of the poorer quarters to a chant reminiscent of the "Campbells are coming", beginning "Here are the prisoners, here are the dogs".

Sometimes we were allowed to walk along the covered pipe line that carries water to the fountains in the town, and there

"Where fig and vine and olive trees  
The anodyne of changeless lives  
Stretched tender fingers to the breeze . . ."

we could forget the barren rock and sordid town in the calm of a leafy valley.

In the winter when our seventy yards of narrow street was deep in snow and we tired of tramping about our ramshackle houses clad in every available rag in an endeavour to keep warm, we had occasional trips further afield. Weeks of snow and a continued temperature below freezing point—Afion being situated 8000 feet above sea level—gave the squalid town a

Christmas card effect that required better conditions of food and clothing to be fully appreciated. We welcomed the chance to take our grumbling guards away from their fires to accompany us on our warmth provoking expeditions. And on the frozen surface of a little stream that meandered past the town we made a "slide"—for want of skates—and slid and tumbled, as well as our patch-work boots would allow, with all the enthusiasm of a Pickwickian party.

Sunset invariably found us carefully counted by the *Bach Chaoush* and his guards and our doors bolted and barred. Darkness dropped its pall upon the Black Rock and the deserted street, and with it came the realisation of unnumbered captive days yet to dawn. . . .

## CHAPTER XVI

### OF PERSECUTIONS AND PLOTS

**D**ESPITE our forced amusements, attempts at industry, and struggle against the deterioration of prison life, the spectre of hopelessness stalked in our camp. Long captivity is the greatest test of patience and unselfishness. Like the professional jester, our outward cheerfulness was too often the cloak for an unhappy heart. Time ceased to be, and events such as the advent of a new prisoner or the arrival of tardy mails were our only links with the outside world.

Letters were heavily censored and for the first year we were allowed only a four-line postcard per week in reply, but notwithstanding we learned a deal of news. The metaphorical reference in one letter that "Dad had lost his bag" and the news that "poor Dad had at last been bagged" in another was sufficient for us to rejoice over the fall of Baghdad, long before our custodians at stagnant Afion had learned of their loss. Months elapsed between mails and as no newspapers were allowed to reach us from home we were dependent on the doubtful source of the *Hilal* for news.

Letters and parcels travelled through Bulgaria and Austria to neutral Switzerland and in consequence were oftentimes delayed for considerable periods en route, while Australians suffered the added disability of greater distance.

Mail news brought both tragedy and comedy to our houses, for many were fated to hear of relatives who had paid the supreme sacrifice. Both tragedy and comedy were certainly experienced by Stormonth, a blunt Australian who received fewer letters than most and who after long waiting rejoiced in the receipt of a long-sought missive only to discover that some unknown and well meaning lady had sent him an illuminated tract which exhorted him to love his neighbour! His impassioned soliloquy over the offending pasteboard would have outdone Hamlet.

Ingenious codes were devised, which perhaps even now it would not be wise to disclose, by which real truths were communicated to officials and friends at home. A few of us also contrived to utilise the Turkish censorship as an unwitting means for conveying letters from one camp to another.

The principal prison camps were at Brussa, Yoshgard and Kastamoni, the last mentioned being broken up later, those who gave their parole going to Gedos, the remainder being sent to Yoshgard.

Our *modus operandi* was to give a note, and envelopes that had already come through the post bearing the censor's stamp, as well as one's own name, number and address, to a prisoner who was transferring to another camp. These envelopes were used for replies and to establish communication between the camps. For when the prisoner arrived at his destination and delivered the note to the addressee, the latter was able to reply by placing a carefully worded letter in the used envelope, which on the next arrival of mail he would place in the pile of unclaimed letters, during sorting. Communication could be thus maintained indefinitely if required by the recipient enclosing further addressed envelopes. We were careful not to abuse the system as there was constant risk of detection by our postman interpreter.

Parcels and books were as belated in arriving as were letters, and as I have already mentioned the parcels were frequently pillaged, while blank paper, including sanitary paper, was always commandeered for *office stationery*.

It was a joyful occasion when a New York Times escaped the vigilance of Musloun, his interpreters and the *Chaoush*. But I shall not forget my disgust at finding that a newspaper that I had carefully and surreptitiously stuffed up my sleeve during unpacking was dated 1908!

Books were sent to Constantinople for censoring, a circumstance which caused a goodly number to remain in the censor's library and in one instance caused a deal of discomfort to one of our number. Dawes was the unfortunate in this instance, a book having arrived for him, and his signature being demanded before it was sent to Constantinople. Knowing the remote chance of its ever being seen again he refused to sign. A furious altercation ensued between the irate Dawes and Musloun, which ended in the injured Englishman shaking an

indignant fist at the Commandant. The Turk, bellowing like a betrayed Othello, jumped to his feet with his hand on his sword and roared orders to the sentries, who ran excitedly to and fro and surrounded the offender. When the commotion ceased it was interpreted to Dawes that he was sentenced to two weeks' imprisonment in a dungeon in the town. Half-an-hour later we helped the lame giant aboard an arabah, hiding amongst his few belongings a bottle of raki and some tinned food, before the arabah rattled away in the darkness with its passenger uproariously shouting "We won't be bothered about".

Two weeks' "solitary" in a dungeon that was formerly a latrine would have taxed the health of the most able-bodied, yet Dawes bore it stoically in spite of his wounds,\* which received little attention.

Soon after his release he was sent to Constantinople, supposedly for exchange, but where, as previously related, he died of typhus while lethargic authorities were tardily negotiating.

Musloun had other methods of treating recalcitrant prisoners, as was shown in the case of Private McKay of the 9th Battalion A.I.F. McKay had been badly wounded on Gallipoli and was sent to Afion after a year in hospital at Constantinople. One day when marching through the town the Australian straggled behind, for which iniquity he was struck on the back with a riding whip by a Turkish Moulassim who accompanied the guard. McKay expostulated, explaining that he had scarcely recovered from his wounds, whereupon he was struck three times more with the whip. Exasperated by this inhuman treatment the soldier struck the Turk on the jaw, spreadeagling him in the road. A *Chaoush* immediately hit the prisoner in the neck with a rifle butt and he was also struck by another of the guard. In spite of a crippled arm, McKay knocked the guards down before being himself struck down by others.

Being brought before the Commandant he was at first sentenced to be shot, which was later commuted to solitary confinement with floggings on twenty successive days. A note passed to our shopping party brought the case to our notice when a strongly-worded letter was sent through the Senior

\* Capt. Dawes had been shot through both shinbones with a large bore bullet, and walked on crutches.

Officer to the inhuman Musloun. The Turk replied that he had further considered the case and that the man was to be sent to another camp. Nevertheless McKay was twice flogged before leaving Afion; some Russians quartered close by heard his cries, the beatings being carried out by the Commandant himself.

Mysloun's treatment of a Russian officer on account of a trifling complaint showed to what depths of barbarity he could readily descend. The Russian complained of the quarters where he was housed, at which the Turk raised his hand to strike him. In self-defence the prisoner attempted to snatch the Turk's sword, at which the guard was summoned and he was marched off to Musloun's office at the church. Having assembled the British and Russian soldier prisoners, the Commandant beat the officer in their presence. His bare feet were placed in the loops of a rifle sling twisted taut in order that Musloun might beat the Russian with his sword on the soles of the feet, backs of the calves and thighs.

As an example to the men the Russian did not cry out but became unconscious after nearly a hundred strokes. Musloun then rested and smoked until his victim regained consciousness, after which he ordered the *Chaoush* and the Cypriote interpreter to continue the punishment, which they did with a heavy thong until they too were fatigued.

Forty strokes is considered an adequate punishment for an Arab, whose feet are hardened to rough usage, yet this officer prisoner received about two hundred before being thrown into an underground cell beneath the Commandant's office. There he lay without attention for three days and would surely have died but for some British Tommies who secretly lowered food and drink to him.

Attending the Commandant's office to receive some money that had been sent him, Prince Avaloff asked for permission to visit the prisoner and was allowed to see him after some demur. He found his countryman crawling painfully round on hands and knees in the darkness, his face badly burnt through having lain on a heap of lime while unconscious. It required a deal of wheedling and veiled threats before Avaloff was able to induce Musloun to allow the unfortunate wreck to be medically treated, and three months elapsed in hospital before he returned to our camp, a much changed man.

Flogging with the *ryak*, as the Turk calls the bastinado, is so common amongst the Turks that prisoners-of-war no doubt seemed delivered into their hands by the will of Allah expressly to be practised upon. A Naval officer, who had acted as Musloun's partner for some months, but whom Musloun rightly suspected of being stationed at Afion to spy upon him, was responsible for the beating of seventeen British N.C.O.s and Petty Officers for some trifling disregard of orders. As he spoke a little English he took a keen delight in taunting the Naval men regarding the British Navy as he beat them. This gentle inquisitor, when later transferred to Kutieh, opened a store with plunder from British parcels, as I have already mentioned.

On his departure, Musloun drove a nail into the coffin of his memory by publicly translating a letter addressed to the Naval officer from a lady friend of decidedly doubtful character, who wrote deploring the fact that it was some time since she had received "some nice English parcels".

Our only opportunity of retaliation was through the medium of his parrot, which he loaned to our camp to be taught English and whose tutoring was painstakingly carried out by the most profane of our number.

The Germans were not alone in the unjust system of indiscriminate retaliation upon prisoners. In 1915 British civilians were placed in the Turkish trenches on Gallipoli because damage had been done to a mosque by British artillery. In 1916 Major Brett—the vulcan of our camp—was sent to work on the roads at Sivas because of alleged ill-treatment of a Turkish Major in British hands, while Captains Brodie and Reekes and Lieutenants Dacre, Treloar and Flynn, five officers of our company at Afion Kara Hissar, were imprisoned in an underground dungeon in the Turkish Ministry of War at Constantinople as a reprisal for rumoured ill-treatment of Turkish prisoners by the British in Egypt, a lying pretext that was soon disproved.

Lieut. Dacre was a recent arrival, who, when flying from a seaplane carrier off the Palestine coast, had run short of petrol and been forced to land his seaplane in the desert, an unpleasant undertaking at the best of times. Captured by Arabs, he was afterwards sent north to Afion, suffering the usual starvation en route. At Bozanti, where he had neither money nor food, he conceived the happy idea of lifting up an untrained



voice in song for the benefit of a number of Turkish troops who were seated round the camp fires. After a preliminary failure, "Oh, You Beautiful Doll", given as a voluntary encore, proved such a success that it brought him sufficient food to assuage the pangs of hunger. On arrival at Afion after recovering from an attack of malaria, he was selected with the officers already named for reprisal. To prevent protest these officers were unblushingly told by Musloun that they were being sent for exchange. After disposing of the few effects they possessed they jubilantly left Afion, promising to make every effort to secure further exchanges on arrival home.

To their despair they were cast into the dungeons of the ill-famed Ministry of War within whose "damp vault's dayless gloom", the infamies of the Inquisition still survived. Its cells crawled with vermin and reeked of pestilence. Political offenders grew old and succumbed to gradual starvation in its noisome atmosphere awaiting trials that never took place, while its gloomy corridors echoed the groans and screams of the hopeless and the tortured. Here Stoker, Cochrane and Price existed for ten weary months, while the British civilians, Todd, Wright and Dexter, after being thrice sentenced to death, were imprisoned there for two long years.

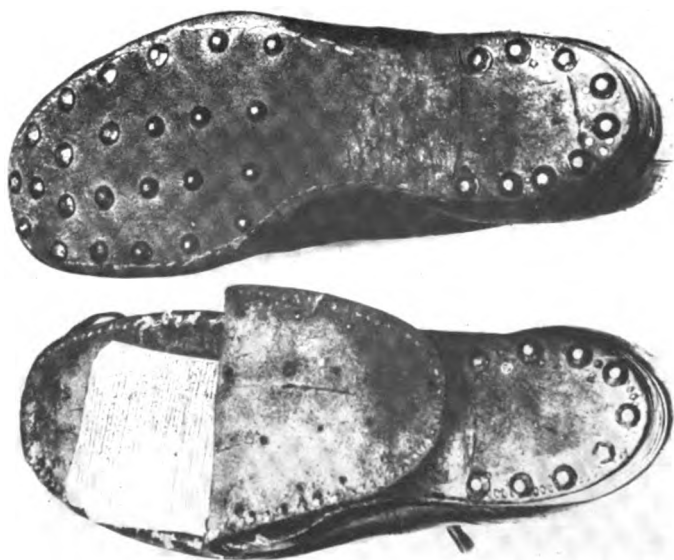
Many another Britisher was fated to languish there, one of them being Capt. Yeats-Brown, who in his "Caught by the Turks" so vividly describes the horrors of this loathsome place.

The five officers who were hoaxed into believing they were to be exchanged remained in their underground dungeon for three months. With lack of exercise, scanty food and meagre light they soon became sickly and weak, and after the first two weeks Brodie developed what the others supposed to be malaria. After several days of sickness, repeated applications resulted in his being examined by the gaol doctor and eventually taken away. Nor did they learn his fate until they collectively threatened the interpreter, who for weeks had vaguely reported favourable progress, whereupon he reluctantly confessed that the sick prisoner had died of typhus shortly after leaving his cell.

During their last fortnight in Constantinople they were allowed to attend the English Church, under escort, and there in conversation with an official of the Dutch Legation they



OUR STREET IN THE ARMENIAN QUARTER. (THE LATTICED HOUSE IS AUSTRALIA HOUSE.)



WHERE THE MICROSCOPIC DIARIES WERE HIDDEN.



learned that the reported cruelties to Turkish officers in Egypt were monstrous falsehoods.

It was difficult to keep a diary of impressions for long, as sooner or later one's labours were fated to fall into the hands of the Turk, owing to the numerous spasmodic searches made by our captors. I was lucky therefore in being able to preserve intact the seven small booklets of microscopic manuscript that I had commenced at Mosul.

In an affluent moment I had bought a wooden Turkish trunk, a roughly built saratoga, wall-papered within and clamorous with gaudy martial and floral emblems without, to the underside of which I nailed a strip of wood into which the books were recessed, while the continuation of a painted brand across the wooden strip gave it the appearance of an original portion of the trunk.

The early chapters of this record were written in tiny booklets measuring  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches by 8 inches. The minute size of the writing can be gauged from the fact that I managed to squeeze an average of three hundred and sixty words on a page. They were made to fit tightly into the bottom of a cigarette box and were covered over with a layer of cigarettes with the original label pasted intact around the box again. This was a secure hiding place, though the books had some narrow escapes from cigarette-hungry comrades.

With the growing scarcity of cardboard, the Règie (Government monopolists of the tobacco industry) ceased to make pasteboard boxes, so I transferred the books to my hat and boots. My Indian topee was badly battered on the day of my capture, and instead of hiding the books in such obvious places as the lining and puggaree I hid them within the pith of the helmet itself. Two other books I hid in the soles of my boots, opening the leather until the books could fit in the recess within, and nailing the sole down again with hobnails. Unfortunately I forgot to remind my comrades of the topee's precious contents before I unceremoniously quitted Turkey and doubtless it is now the unique headgear of some unsuspecting Ottoman. The other jottings were more fortunate, being brought home by an Australian fellow prisoner after the armistice.

Cunning and ingenuity were required to outwit our captors, for searches took place at most unexpected moments. Various

pretexts would be advanced on each occasion and as soon as we were assembled outside, our belongings would be thoroughly ransacked and anything incriminating or sufficiently prized by the searchers taken possession of by Musloun and his rascally staff.

Once we were outwitted when it was announced that new orders were to be read. We had not been searched for some time, nevertheless I took the precaution of putting my diaries in my pocket and hiding them under some timber in the courtyard. Once we were outside, sentries were posted at every door and a thorough ransack of all our possessions was made. Every scrap of written matter, maps, letters, verses, notes of various studies and a quantity of books were seized, placed in sacks and put under guard in an outhouse.

Much that was incriminating and a great deal that was exasperating to lose, owing to long hours spent in its compilation, awaited censoring. Personally I had a digest of Gibbon which I valued, also some letters written by some of the soldiers at the church which I had been careless enough not to destroy.

We knew punishment was certain, if for no other reason than our criticism of the Turks and their gentle ways. Discussion immediately took place as to what should be done to save the situation. The drastic solution of burning the outhouse with its incriminating contents found favour with some. Sir Robert Paul was left to decide what was best. After making a list of the most compromising and cherished documents he made his plans. The outhouse measured about twelve feet square and stood in a corner of the yard at right angles to the rear walls of our quarters. Before its locked window and door stood a sentry with loaded rifle. There was but one other aperture in its thick walls, which was a small unglazed window covered with wire netting, high up the wall, facing No. 4 House.

A chain of communication was established so that an officer watching at a street window could give prompt notice of Musloun's approach, while another unobtrusively watched the movements of the *Bach Chaoush* and the sentries who were off-duty. Paul's daring plan was to leave No. 4 House by the window that faced the outhouse, and pulling away the wire netting climb inside while some comrades engaged the sentries in small talk. The plot appeared dangerous to the point of

foolhardiness and therefore appealed to Paul's Irish temperament, for the sentry had but to walk about at his post to see him climbing through the window, while the slightest noise on Paul's part or a turn of the head of the sentry when he was inside would have betrayed him and left no chance of escape.

The red-haired *posta*, *Sari* (Ginger) was on duty at the time. He was both efficient and fanatical, but knowing his weakness for dogs Tebbs led his Turkish poodle pup past the unsuspecting sailor at the crucial moment and asked him his opinion of the animal. *Sari* rose to the bait and after some diplomatic questioning from Tebbs, assisted by Stephen White, *Sari* unbosomed himself of many sage remarks about dogs, in addition to the history of sundry canine friends he had seen or owned. Meanwhile Paul swiftly and successfully carried out his enterprise by making two journeys into the outhouse, thereby salving the most incriminating of the notebooks, leaving the remainder strewn haphazard about the floor.

Musloun considered it better to ignore the matter than to admit his failure, but Scaife was given ten days' confinement in the cell previously occupied by Dawes for tearing up a portion of his notebook while the search was in progress, and our orders and regulations thereafter became more rigorous. We were not allowed to possess more than two pieces of paper each, lectures were forbidden, walks were rare, and if we owned a notebook or a diary it had to be censored, an order which led to the clever transference of the censor's stamp from useless books to others that were taboo.

On another occasion Musloun arrived in great haste, evidently in answer to a telephone message from the guard. Rushing into our house he unceremoniously pushed his way into Paul's room, upsetting a quiet chess party, and climbing into the attic tramped the length and breadth of the four houses. We heard that his visit was due to a suspicion that we possessed a secret wireless set, because Paul and I had exercised daily with a dummy telegraph key, the tapping of which had evidently been overheard by the guard. The visit to the ceiling bore fruit, however, for therein Musloun found a hoard of bread, some rope and three fezzes, with which equipment Paul and two other conspirators had intended to escape.

As I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, out of consideration for the weak state of the Kut men it was decided

during the summer of 1916 not to subject them to the risk of "strafing" by attempts at escape. But winter having passed and the bulk of the men being sent elsewhere with working parties, that reason now ceased to exist.

Musloun was alive to the possibilities of spring and took steps accordingly. A futile attempt had been made by Paul, Fulton and Haggard, who had lowered themselves at night from an upstairs window over the stone wall into the builder's yard next door. The plot was supposed to be a deadly secret, yet when the hour of the flit arrived practically every eye in the camp turned in the direction of the window. A touch of comedy was added by F——, who after being the unsuccessful guardian of the secret for some weeks, at the last moment asked to be included as the fourth member of the party. Unfortunately he considered himself improperly dressed when his turn came to make his exit, and returning for his best suit found the others had disappeared by the time he had changed. They were fated to go no further than the builder's yard, however, for they heard a newly-placed sentry tramping up and down beyond its outer wall, and after a long and patient wait they wisely decided to return the way they had come.

Shortly after this attempt a surprise search took place and all civilian clothes except the ones we were actually wearing were taken from us, though I succeeded in retaining an extra coat by the simple expedient of wearing two. Another search was made a few days later when we were told that certain of our number had to give their parole not to escape or they would be closely confined in the town. Paul, Fulton and Haggard were among the number. Together with Armstrong and Furneaux of the town camp they refused and accordingly were isolated in a house where "they could be more closely watched". Others among the suspects had never in their wildest moments dreamed of escaping, but because they were students of Turkish or too evident physical culturists they were included in the black list. Seven gave their parole, which had to be renewed monthly, but after the first month Yeats-Brown and Stone recanted and were also taken off to close confinement in a separate house. Happily for the majority of us our parole was not requested, though it was plain that Musloun was endeavouring to lessen his responsibilities by forcing a few at

a time. The stand taken by those who refused him, therefore, was worthy of the highest commendation.

I was fortunate to be suspected by neither friends nor foes, for though I considered every prisoner should do his utmost to escape, both for the sake of himself and for British prestige, I was careful not to air my views too publicly on the matter, for as Lieut. Jones writes of Yoshgard in "The Road to En-Dor", "he who wished to run had to defeat the vigilance of his own comrades before he could tackle the Turk".

The house in which the five officers were confined was in the same street as the houses of the town camp—to which I had been transferred—but was just outside the limit of street within which the not-so-closely-confined were allowed to promenade. Three recently arrived R.N.A.S. airmen, Lieuts. Heriot, Jameson and Bysshe, were isolated in a house at the other extremity of the walk, which measured about seventy-five yards in length. These unfortunates, who came from the Argentine, England and Canada respectively, belonged to the same squadron and shared the same fate, being shot down over Gallipoli. For no apparent reason they had been kept for months in the Ministry of War at Constantinople and on arriving at Afion Musloun had endeavoured to force them to give their parole. This they steadfastly refused to do and like the five officers at the other end of the street suffered in consequence.

The "strafees" were forbidden all communication with the outside prison world, though Paul and I used frequently to wave Morse messages to each other and notes were surreptitiously passed. For seven months they were shut up in their dilapidated insanitary houses, being allowed out of doors into twenty yards of the narrow street for only half-an-hour each morning and afternoon. By comparison we were well treated, for we had quite seventy-five yards in which we could walk at any hour of the day until sunset.

When at last they were released after persistent protests by a new senior officer possessed of more backbone than his predecessors, they were thin and weak, in spite of their gallant efforts to keep fit by exercise within their limited bounds. By this time snow lay heavy upon the narrow street, which made escape impossible.

It was difficult to maintain one's health under normal prison



circumstances, for food was daily growing dearer and poorer in quality. Coarse bread and *peckmez* was our staple food and *peckmez* soared from five piastres per oke—about 8d. per pound—to 10/- per pound. Other eatables rose proportionately, meat of any description being 4/6 and 6/6 per pound. Sugar cost £3 10s. per pound, kerosene £8 a tin, and tea from £20 to £30 per pound, and was practically unobtainable. An Anatolian herb, more like the senna than the table variety, we used in its stead, while burnt maize was a passable substitute for coffee.

Turkish metal currency had entirely disappeared; notes and stamps for as small amounts as a quarter piastre being universally used. So low was the purchasing power of paper money that a gold lira, which ordinarily was worth 18/-, could be sold for 450 or 500 piastres (£4 10s. to £5). Unfortunately we did not benefit by this depreciation when money was sent from home, for only one hundred and twenty piastres per pound sterling were allowed us.

When absolutely penniless while awaiting long deferred pay, we obtained food by various stratagems. The shopkeepers in the bazaar would allow us credit for only a week, so at its termination a strange orderly would do our shopping, declaring that he was attached to a newly-established mess. When his credit was exhausted we would send still another messenger, and so on. Our obligations were settled on the first remittance. I know of only one debt that was left unpaid. It was possible to write anything as a receipt for goods obtained on credit and we found that a shopkeeper who clamoured for payment from a shopping party was found to possess a chit which told its own story. "Received one oke of *peckmez* by a hungry soldier. God will repay."

Those whose private means did not permit of writing frequent cheques suffered in consequence, particularly if no kindly institution saw that parcels were despatched to them.

In this respect the Russians were the greatest sufferers. Even before the Revolution few parcels reached them, while the chaotic state that followed put an end to any comforts and communications whatever. Realising the remoteness of being reimbursed for expenditure upon such prisoners, the Turks only reluctantly paid them their pittance. Receiving no rations, they were constantly on the verge of starvation, until an allow-

ance of a lira per month was paid them by the Dutch Legation, upon the recommendation of a visiting Danish Commission. Many of these unhappy men went barefoot to save boots that they might need on their release. Others trapped sparrows, or on their walks to a creek nearby caught frogs, crabs and tortoises which they sold to the French and ourselves. Fuel for cooking and warmth was an item that made considerable inroads into our limited exchequer. The district being denuded of trees, cattle dung was the principal local substitute for fuel. Children carrying tins followed the buffalo and oxen through the streets and into the fields to catch the droppings and pat them into briquettes. Wood was carried great distances in queer solid-wheeled buffalo carts by picturesque Circassians and realised exorbitant prices. In the winter when the roads were blocked with snow, the only timber to reach the town was carried on donkey-back, the price owing to the limited supply being proportionately higher.

The winter of 1917 was particularly severe as the following entry in my diary shows :—

“*Christmas Day.* The weather still continues to be bitterly cold, and as we have run out of wood we endeavoured to borrow some from another house that was well stocked, but were unsuccessful. In order to get enough to cook our food we chopped out the ground floor of our house (where the cows are normally kept) and thus were able to carry on till we raised a loan and bought some at sixpence a pound. Some charcoal for the orderlies cost us  $1\frac{1}{4}$  per lb., and as we are unable to spare any for warmth for ourselves we tramp up and down in the snow until we are warm before turning into bed. For a whole month the thermometer has only been once above zero (centigrade) and has fluctuated between six and fourteen degrees below. The chatties in which we keep our drinking water froze solid and cracked and water freezes in our glasses at meals. Nevertheless we decided at all costs to enjoy Christmas to the extent of a good dinner for the orderlies and ourselves. We bought a goose for 10/-, getting it cheaper because it had a wing broken, but it died just as Moore (the orderly) brought it home. We could get no rebate on the dead goose and had to buy another at 18/-. So we enjoyed our Christmas after all.”

Cooking was carried out with improvised ovens that were

skilfully made from kerosene tins or sheets of iron, and considering the means and the food available very creditable culinary work was carried out.

One soldier-prisoner orderly was allotted to every three officers, one of the orderlies in each house, either through choice or chance, acting as cook. For some time the French boasted a super-cook, late chef at a famous Parisian club, who created delectable dishes from negligible nothings.

A glimpse at one of his fête-day masterpieces was calculated to set us dreaming in gastronomical paradises. Unhappily for this genius and his patrons he was indiscreet enough to allow an entry in his diary to be discovered by the Turks. And for his candour in alleging that the Turkish flag would be more suitable for a sanitary flag than a national emblem, he was doomed to spend the rest of his captivity at Angora in the capacity of cook to a Turkish Pasha.

All of our cooks were not Soyers, though they performed nobly under the circumstances. Others among the orderlies, hewers of precious firewood and drawers at the fountain, possessed useful and unsuspected attributes. When a woolly sweater became too holey to be pulled on and off with safety, Private Jones would unravel it and knit it into useful socks, while Private Smith could patch boots in no mean fashion. An Indian orderly, on receipt of a pair of horse clippers in an Embassy distribution, set up in practice as a barber. A Russian with empty *peckmez* boxes and stray pieces of wire made excellent *balalaikas* and mandolins that intensified the musical medley in the Russian quarters and helped him to wax fat; though some of his less gifted countrymen at the Madrisseh, who lacked his money-making propensities, caused some little consternation when it was discovered that in their extremity they had eaten a favourite cat belonging to the Turkish guard.

Stranger things must have been eaten by the civil population, who felt the pinch of hunger sorely as there were few men to till the soil and the greater part of their produce was sent to Germany. The most affluent civilians had been Armenians, who as the insignia carved upon the flat tombs in the Christian cemetery attested were the artisans and tradesmen of the town. This custom was brought to our notice when we were attending the burial of two of our number.

The iron-covered cemetery gates were riddled with bullets

as if by machine gun fire and suggested that some Armenians had sold their lives dearly. We had carried our comrades a mile or more in a box which had to be returned to the hospital and on our arrival at the place of interment we found also the coffinless corpses of five soldier prisoners (two British, two Russian and an Indian) that also awaited burial. Our stay therefore was more protracted than we had expected, and we took the opportunity of inspecting the unique Armenian headstones. An anvil and hammer in marble denoted the village blacksmith, a peel head the baker, scissors the tailor and the rule and compasses the mason, always graven on a marble slab which also bore a carved incense urn.

The Mohammedan headstones are always vertical, and usually consist of rude upright splinters of rock, and if erected in marble are surmounted with turbans or fezzes in marble, and in the case of women who have borne children with carved trees bearing fruit.

But few Armenians had found an honourable resting place since the outbreak of the Great War. The Bryce report shows that the Armenian massacres were not sporadic, but were simultaneous throughout the Turkish Empire, and consequently must have been officially authorised.

In Afion we saw no actual massacres, but there was a suspicious absence of menfolk among the Armenians, while the women and children were on the verge of starvation.

Whole families had been evicted in 1915 from Afion, and crammed into cattle trucks were deported to distant destinations to die of want and misery. Others who had not the means to pay were driven off in the general exodus, the males for convenience being done to death and the younger of the women distributed among the soldiers. One of the British officers\*, who had been taken prisoner near the Suez Canal soon after the outbreak of war, was in Ourfa from April to August 1915 when the extermination of the Armenians took place there.

Orders were given that all arms were to be given in to the Turkish authorities, but remembering the massacres of 1895, when Christians were disarmed and thousands were immediately massacred by the Moslem mob, there was some dissention, whereupon several leading Armenians were hanged. It was rumoured that orders for a general extermination of Armenians

\* Captain Stephen White, Egyptian Police.

were soon to arrive, and indeed shortly afterwards the entire Armenian population of the surrounding villages was wiped out. In consequence, when the townspeople of Ourfa were ordered to leave after two preliminary massacres, in which five hundred were killed and the city looted, the remainder decided to die fighting rather than be ignominiously slaughtered. German artillery soon smashed their barricades, demolished their church and their houses, while Turkish regular troops completed the slaughter, but not before the Armenians had accounted for about three hundred soldiers. Dead littered the streets and cartloads of corpses were daily brought past the quarters where the Britisher lived. Together with some interned French civilians, with whom he was quartered, he wrote to the Commandant asking if the killed might be buried, but in reply was told with typical Turkish duplicity and untruthfulness that no corpses had ever lain in the streets of Ourfa!

During the earlier massacres, my informant stated he saw an Armenian tailor who had had his back broken through his head being forced between his knees while seated in the doorway of his shop. Women and children passing through from distant towns were brutally kicked by the guards. He had seen children die in the streets and women who through long marching without boots were forced to crawl on hands and knees, while at the railway station they implored strangers to take their babies that they might not die.

Even more terrible and revolting stories are related in the Bryce reports\*—and Ourfa was but one of many towns that suffered—but the corroborative story of this unemotional soldier is a sufficiently convincing testimony of the hideous cruelty of the Young Turk and his inability to rule subjects of a different faith.

The only Armenians allowed to remain in Afion were those who had relatives in the army, yet even their lot was utter misery. Some of the women eked out a precarious existence by weaving cloth; others worked upon the roads. Starving children and their mothers haunted the bazaars where they competed with the pariahs for food.

Our town camp was located in the houses of a narrow street in the Armenian quarter, the tenants of which had gone Allah-

\* Pages 523-532.

knew-where. The street was bisected by another that contained the village fountain, at which inelegant Rachels came to draw water—household water supplies being naturally unknown in Asiatic Turkey.

During the day the seventy-yards of its uneven surface that constituted our promenade was a modern Babel, where Russian, French, Hindustani, Arabic, Turkish and English—the last with every accent and inflection—could be heard in a single turn. Mentors imparting tuition to stumbling pupils in many ancient and modern tongues rubbed shoulders with unkempt Cossacks and Georgian soldiers in tousled kalpaks, who halted in their water carrying to pass the time of day with Frenchmen, Britisher or Indian bent on similar domestic duty. The Esperanto for such occasions was bazaar Turkish, a patois of the mellifluous Turkish tongue which seemed to be readily acquired by the most illiterate.

Though the individuals and language were more diverse, the habitudes of our street might be likened to the promenading passengers of a liner, the favourite topic of each becoming known, merely a chance word serving to betray the speaker. “*Imaginez-vous les Turcs, les salles cochons qui*”—unmistakably denoted Avaloff as surely as his emphatic enunciation, and in like manner “*quand je suis-er-quand-j’étais—dans les Indies-er-je—*” diminuendoing into the distance, just as certainly revealed Commander Goad labouring under the burden of his morning conversational practice, while guttural greetings and garbled English identified other beginners.

Luscombe and I had devoted some time to the Russian language, for it was conceivable that escape or future war service might lead us to Russian fields. The departure of the Russian merchantmen to Kutieh brought our lessons to an untimely end, but the arrival of Avaloff’s party nearly twelve months later induced us to take up the thread of its complicated conjugations again. The difficulties of their own language and their well-known linguistic abilities and mastery of French made child’s play of Turkish for the Russians, and except for the accent they made good progress in English. Our lessons necessitated a knowledge of French as a means of communication, therefore serving a twofold purpose, besides giving us an insight into the Russian character.

It was through friendships formed among the Russians that

I was eventually materially assisted in escaping from Turkey.

Gabriel Zainchinkoff was an efficient teacher though a poor scholar and a man who would go through fire for a friend. When the Bolshevik peace with Germany was signed and the Russians hoped for a speedy relief, Zainchinkoff undertook to return to Afion from Russia with false passports for Luscombe and me.

He would accomplish this by presenting two friends at the passport office in his native Kieff, who resembled us as nearly as possible.

Armed with these, he would return to Turkey, having first advised us in code by letter of his coming, and arrived at Afion we were to look for him at a certain street corner that was visible from our house. We were to escape the following night, meeting him at a rendezvous near the station, from whence we should all make our way to Russia.

Unfortunately for our fine plans, the Turks had no intention of releasing the Russians, and after keeping a tiny anticipatory note to the British authorities concealed for some months in his shoulder strap, Gabriel returned it to me.

Vladimir Vilkovsky was another, and later in Constantinople I was to learn his worth as an intermediary. But it was to Konstantin Kambani that I was indebted for the plan which ultimately enabled me to leave Turkey.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HOPES AND HAZARDS

“**W**E in Yosgard had put the lesser before the greater good, our duty to ourselves, as prisoners, before our duty to ourselves, as men, and to our country. For reasons that have been stated it was considered wrong to attempt to escape. The general feeling was that there was no choice but to wait for peace with such patience as we could muster . . . We did not see that in giving up *trying* to free ourselves we were giving up our one hope of happiness until peace came . . . It is perhaps too much to say that it is a man's duty to escape, but certainly it is *not* his duty to bar the way to escape either for himself or for anyone else. Had every prisoner in Yosgard bent his energies to achieve freedom not only for himself but for his fellows, things might have been different in the camp. Strafed the camp might have been, but it would have been in its duty, happy in discomfort instead of miserable in comparative ease, and welded into unity by a common aim. Prisoners most of us would have remained, but not beaten captives; the victims of misfortune, but not its slaves.”\*

And what Jones so ably wrote of Yosgard is equally true of Afion Kara Hissar.

The self-righteous assurance of the faint-hearted, who declared escape to be wrong, or impossible, discouraged the wavering and undoubtedly increased the difficulties of the determined.

Escape had to be spoken of with bated breath, for there were those who were jealous of their comfort, and a suspected escapee ran the risk of becoming a butt of ridicule for the passive, or of having his real or supposed intentions blazoned around the camp. . . . And in such a cosmopolitan camp as

\* “The Road to En-Dor,” by Lieut. R. H. Jones.



was ours it was difficult to know how closely indiscretion and treachery were related.

Since the attempted escape of the three submarine officers, escape was more difficult owing to our being more closely guarded, and the summer of 1916 passed into winter without any serious attempts being made, the disinclination to inflict additional suffering upon the unhappy men of Kut being the principal deterrent.

The strafing of Paul and his disciples during the summer of 1917 had left me bereft of possible companionship in a flit. Unsuccessfully I had tested one of the most likely.

Needless to say a reasonable plan and a resolute companion are essentials in the outfit of any escapee; and in this instance he who travels alone does not travel fastest.

Though I had no dearth of plans I cast about in vain for a suitable companion.

It was the winter of 1917 when through voicing mutual opinions regarding seventy officers of the Kastamoni camp who had given their parole and were passing through Afion to ignominious ease at Gedos, that I discovered Luscombe to be an ardent escapee.

The exodus from Kastamoni had been brought about by the escape of four officers\* from that camp, which led to its being disbanded. The one hundred and fifty odd officers there were given the option of giving their parole for the duration of the war or of being sent to Changri as a strafe. Much discussion took place regarding the advisability of placing comfort before duty and resulted in one half of their number taking the line of least resistance, while the others were despatched to Changri and later divided between the Yohgard and Afion camps.

Although the disabilities of age, sickness and financial difficulties in extreme cases may have excused certain individuals for surrendering the last remaining prerogative of a prisoner, the action of the majority in giving parole—even those who

\* After being recaptured near Sinope on the Black Sea coast, where they were endeavouring to find a small boat to sail for Russia, the escort of the British officers fell in with a band of brigands. During the fighting that followed three of the Britishers went over to the brigands, the fourth† being wounded and retaken by the Turks. In company with these outlaws the others‡ returned to the coast, and eventually obtaining a boat they set sail with the brigands to Sebastopol, ultimately reaching England after many adventures. Unfortunately Capt. Tipton was killed soon afterwards when flying in France. See "Adventures in Turkey and Russia" by E. H. Keeling.

† Capt. R. T. Sweet (died later at Yohgard).

‡ Lieut. (now Lt.-Colonel) E. H. Keeling, M.C., I.A.R., and Capt. R. J. Tipton, R.F.C.

were unjustly ordered by their superior officers to do so—undoubtedly lowered British prestige in the eyes of the Turks and increased the hardships of those who refused, and it is incomprehensible to me why these officers were not court-martialled on their release.

Opinions differ regarding conditions at Gedos. Certain it is that good treatment and unfettered liberty were the sugar-coated bribes that were proffered. And if these specious promises still further typified the Turk, and cheaper food, comparative comfort, and greater freedom were not so prodigally lavished as was expected, no sympathetic tear was shed by fellow prisoners in Changri, Yosgard, or Afion Kara Hissar.

It is only fair to mention that a few prisoners were already confined at Gedos when it was transformed into a parole camp, the majority of those already there stoutly resisting the temptation, and suffering long isolation before they succumbed to the inevitable. Through so many Britishers giving parole, the Turks were saved both men and money, and troops that had been ill-spared to guard prisoners were released for service at the front. Moreover from this time onwards no grievances were redressed at Afion, and whatever the complaint the alternative of transfer to Gedos on parole was always held out by the crafty Musloun.

Lieut. Luscombe had distinguished himself when leading a platoon of the 14th Battalion A.I.F. during the August offensive on Gallipoli. After being cut off by the enemy he put up a gallant resistance until overwhelmed, his few survivors being taken prisoner with him, on the recommendation of some Turks he had previously taken.

Together we elaborated plans. It was our intention when the snow thawed to remove some loosened nails from an unused side door in our house and march out at night dressed as Turkish women. The disguise was not difficult, for in provincial Afion there were few beauteous houris, and any drab material that covered us and was held together before the face would have sufficed as make-up for the inelegant animated bundles of bedding thereabouts. Wearing clogs and carrying a lantern we hoped to pass the *posta* in the side street, when his comrade in the main thoroughfare was at the farther end of his beat. Discarding the disguise in the hills behind the town, we intended to wait in a cutting where trains slowed

down to jump aboard a Smyrna-bound train, riding at night and getting off to hide by day. Near Smyrna we hoped to strike out for the coast, and if fortune favoured us to steal a boat at Yeni Fatcha and sail to Mytilene. If we were unsuccessful in obtaining a boat or the materials to make a raft, we intended to use some sheep bladders as water-wings and endeavour to swim the five kilometres at the narrowest part of the straits which separated Mytilene with its Greco-French garrison from the mainland.

As I had frequently taken comic parts in our theatricals, the sheep bladders were easily purchased on the pretence of their being stage property. We conserved a food supply, arranged a day that was convenient for Fulton and Stone (who also thought of escaping), and made maps. As I had to spend some weeks in bed owing to an injured ankle I had ample opportunity to do this, making several enlargements from a small German map.

An accidental kick during a strenuous rugger match caused the injury, and on the advice of our medical officer, "Tiny" Cattell, a 6-ft. 4-inch member of our mess, applied the remedy, declaring that what he did not know about poulticing was not worth knowing.

Unfortunately in his zeal to do good, "Tiny" applied the poultice boiling, binding it to the injured limb until next day. The result was a parboiled effect that became septic, but which after four weeks of treatment from our M.O. healed sufficiently to permit me to move about on crutches.

Having fixed a propitious night for our flit, our plans were frustrated by Musloun Bey being placed under arrest for his misdemeanours by a Turkish Commission, and we were asked by the senior British officer to be on our best behaviour during his trial, so as not to prejudice the Commission's finding.

The best laid plans of mice and men . . .

Musloun's downfall had been brought about by the report of a Turkish Red Crescent official who had visited us and heard complaints in defiance of Musloun's orders. Lieut.-Col. Baines of the Indian Medical Service, who had recently been transferred with twenty other officers from Yoshgard and who on all occasions was untiring in his efforts to improve conditions for the men, informed the official of their neglected state and requested that he be allowed to visit and question them in

order to investigate certain rumours. During the Commandant's absence from his office a visit was made to the church, when it was reported to the Medical Officer that Musloun had shamelessly robbed many of the men of pay due for work done on the roads and had committed unnatural offences on four of their number.

The hope that justice might be meted out to this degenerate beast was sufficient to make the camp exemplary. But he was far from being a poor man—two years as a prison Commandant was sufficient to make him otherwise—and bribery had its way. He was exonerated and released.

Almost simultaneously, the Russian ships' officers, who had shared our confinement in the church, returned to Afion from Kutieh. Their camp had been abandoned because of the Bolshevik peace with the Central Powers, which, though distasteful to them as bourgeoisie, seemed likely to bring about their release.

Piqued by his trial and determined to rigorously guard the Russians to the last, the Commandant supplemented our sailor guards with a cordon of soldiers. One of them was posted on the flat roof behind our house, making the first steps in our plans almost impossible, as we could be seen leaving the house from this point.

Among our acquaintances in the newly-arrived Russian party were the brothers Kambani, who had been part owners of the erstwhile British tramp steamer "Ida," of whose British traditions they were inordinately proud. Every island of the Levant and all the ports of call on the Black Sea were familiar to them. During the Balkan War they ran the gauntlet of the Turkish blockade, making several daring voyages for the Greeks from Odessa to Salonica. Their relatives and forbears were sailors too, and their love for the ship, that represented a lifetime's savings, was shown in the ikon-like reverence paid to various miniature lifebelts bearing the magic name of "Ida", enclosing family groups of the owners.

From Konstantin Kambani I endeavoured to learn something of Yeni Fotcha and the nature of the Greek fisherfolk thereabouts. He saw through my plot on the instant and assured me that there were no longer any Greeks in that vicinity. Recently their boats had been seized or sunk and the owners driven off by the Turks, otherwise being of Greek

descent and speaking the language, he would have willingly accompanied us. "If you could reach Constantinople, Meester Wi-et," he suggested, "perhaps you could escape to one of the ships which now trade between Odessa and Constantinople. A new prisoner told me there is a ship there now. And in the Café Maritza, which I knew long before the war, there is a waiter called Theodore who may help you."

Thus a new plan was unfolded and I decided that, as an alternative venture, while striving to find a solution of the difficulty of eluding the sentry on the roof, to endeavour by some means to reach Constantinople.

Besides the Russians from Kutieh there had been frequent arrivals of British prisoners. As already mentioned, twenty-two officers were transferred to Afion from Yoshgard. From them we learnt of the extraordinary spiritualistic seances that had been held in that camp. There were some of us who scoffed, but others, half converted, were prepared to believe the most extravagant happenings. Among the new arrivals was the "Secretary of the Spiritualistic Society", whose lengthy reports of the proceedings were to be handed to Sir Oliver Lodge after the war. To a select gathering he related the wondrous doings of the mediums, Lieuts. Jones and Hill. Knowing the credulity of the speaker (who had been my observer in Mesopotamia) I was perhaps less easily convinced than some. We heard of buckets of water that were miraculously overturned, windows that supernaturally smashed, and of wonderful prophesying and thought reading. "Col. Coventry was a sceptic like some of you," declared the secretary, "but he was at length convinced when the spook answered a question of his." "What was the question?" was eagerly asked, "What won the Derby in 1862? The question was written by the Colonel, sealed in my presence, and the envelope kept by me, as secretary, until the next seance, when it was answered by simply placing the envelope on the medium's forehead," declared this disciple. The evidence had a mixed reception. "Why didn't you get the winner for 1920 as well?" from me, disgusted the faithful.

We heard much of Hill and Jones during the next few weeks. How Hill had made a camera, of his conjuring skill, how he was persecuted by anti-escapees, how he and Jones had led the Turkish Commandant and his staff to dig for buried

treasure the location of which had been revealed by the accommodating spook, and how eventually they had been segregated from the camp through practising telepathy. Finally they were on their way to Constantinople owing to their demented condition.

It seemed a moot point with the newcomers whether the insanity were real or assumed. Several like Capt. Munday implicitly believed in the spiritual manifestations and were of opinion that these two officers used a marvellous supernatural gift to have fun with the Turk. The belief in their lunacy was not so general, though news of their attempted suicide at Mardin, when en route for treatment at Constantinople, added considerable weight. Even at this stage, not realising the skilful plotting and unconquerable determination that underlay their simulation, I could not but admire their cleverness.

The *dénouement* of their scheming awaited me at Constantinople.

Another celebrity was made known to us on the arrival in January 1918 of Lieut.-Col. S. F. Newcombe, R.E., with five other officers. Like Col. Lawrence of Hedjaz fame, Col. Newcombe spoke Arabic fluently, and passing on several occasions as an Arab, having spent ten years in the Soudan. Keen-eyed, tall and athletic, with the pleasant but mobile features of the player of many parts, he had already acted in several capacities during the war, and as C.R.E. with the Australians on Gallipoli and in France had earned their unstinted admiration.

An Englishman of the best military type, such as have glorified Britain's name in the East, he was captured while carrying out a daring enterprise behind the Turkish lines shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. Twice the British had suffered reverses in the attacks upon ancient Gaza, which barred the way to Palestine, and for the third blow which ultimately freed the Holy Land every preparation had been made by the new Commander-in-Chief, Lord Allenby, and the Australian Commander of the Desert Corps, Sir Harry Chauvel. To act in conjunction with the cavalry attack upon the Turkish flank at Beersheba, Col. Newcombe volunteered to move out in advance, with a carefully selected body of men, and circling the enemy's left cut off their retreat by taking up a position in rear on the Hebron-Jerusalem road. The party consisted

of six officers and about fifty men from various units mounted on camels and armed with machine guns.

On his arrival in Afion, Col. Newcombe and two of his party received a week's close confinement for an attempted escape when in Constantinople, and after his release Luscombe and I "splashed" to the extent of buying a dish of buffalo cream—complete with a sprinkling of sesame seeds which prevents contamination from evil eyes—and entertained the new arrivals at tea.

Never did a prison afternoon pass more quickly, as we listened to the latest war news from France, and after tentative questioning learned the story of his capture and attempted escape. Accompanied by a large force of Arabs under Abdullah, a son of the King of Hedjaz, and with money and rifles for distribution among Arabs in rear of the Turkish lines, they reached their objective on the Hebron road, taking some Bedouin prisoners in a skirmish and driving the Turks from an occupied village en route. A German Headquarters and about fifty prisoners were taken, and a company of Turkish troops that advanced to attack them in close order was almost annihilated. Meanwhile they were abandoned by the Arabs, who as usual made off when fighting began. The Turkish retreat not having begun on the third day, they were heavily attacked after their position had been reconnoitred by aeroplane. Marksmen steadily picked off the machine gunners, and after more than half the detachment was killed or wounded, the remainder surrendered as there was no hope of relief.

When confined in Constantinople, Col. Newcombe had attempted to escape with Captains Mousley and Gardiner, and in conjunction with a British civilian confederate attempted to sail the Sea of Marmora in the hope of passing through the Dardanelles. Unfortunately for them the mast of their weather-beaten craft broke and they were forced to return, re-entering their prison by night as they knew of no hiding place. The Turks would not have known but for an interpreter go-between who tried to blackmail them and was soundly beaten in consequence and informed on them, but too late to prevent their departure for Afion.

The result was the mild strafe in Afion, and, a month or two later, the departure of Gardiner and the Colonel from our camp for a term in the dread Ministry of War.

While at Afion Col. Newcombe had not let the grass grow beneath his feet. Soon after his arrival he submitted an elaborate plan to Musloun Bey for draining a large lake in the vicinity of Konia, which he declared was a worthy public work. Meanwhile he received permission to organise the buying of food for British officers on a wholesale plan, by which economical results were assured. But believing that both schemes were formulated as a means to an end, and that either was calculated to give the originator greater freedom to arrange an escape, I presumed on a knowledge of map-making gained at a pre-war topography school to offer my services as an assistant.

His plans were not fated to bear fruit and after serving their sentences at the Ministry of War, Gardiner returned alone to Afion, while Newcombe was sent to the senior officers' camp at Broussa.

His subsequent adventures would rival those of the Moor of Cervantes. Through a chance acquaintanceship made while convalescing from smallpox in Constantinople, he again succeeded in escaping and at the time of the armistice was supplying Allied propaganda to the Turkish press. His confederate was a Greco-French lady (now Mrs. Newcombe) who followed the Colonel to Broussa, and with whom he kept up a surreptitious correspondence while arranging his escape. In the disguise of a Mohammedan priest he left the camp during the preliminary arrangements. Later he went forth as an Arab and reaching the coast, where two Grecian boatmen awaited him, crossed the Marmora after a hazardous voyage and arrived once more in Constantinople. Unable to obtain transport to Russia as he had originally intended, from the house of Mdle. S.'s relatives he wrote propaganda and proclamations that assisted the downfall of the Turkish Government and hastened the flight of Talaat and Enver. By November 11th, 1918, this escaped prisoner was the trusted adviser of Turkish public men and the confidant of the Vali of Smyrna, by whom he was sent to Smyrna to act as a special envoy to negotiate terms with the British, soon after General Townshend from his island home at Prinkipo was despatched on a similar mission.\*

Most of the prisoners who arrived in Afion during the last

\* Since the above was written Capt. Moualey's "Secrets of a Kuttite" has appeared, giving further details of Colonel Newcombe's doings in Constantinople.



months of 1917 and early in 1918 were aviators who had been shot down in aerial combat or were victims of engine failure on the Mesopotamian or Palestine fronts. The campaign in Palestine had already eclipsed that of Mesopotamia in importance. Since the Russian defection and the withdrawal of Muscovite troops from Asia Minor, Palestine had become the principal thorn in the side of the Turk.

Ceaseless vigilance was essential on the part of the Royal Air Force, which included No. 1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps. Possession of the latest types of aeroplanes meant mastery of the air, and the race for efficiency was keen. As the Turks have no aptitude for flying the Germans had sent some of their finest pilots and best material to the Palestine front. Many a stirring aerial encounter took place in the heavens between old-world Gaza and Jerusalem. Reputations were won and lost in a day and aerial heroes like Majors Peter Drummond and Murray Jones and Captain Ross Smith\* and the redoubtable German, Felmy, were the talk of the opposing camps.

The vanquished, in thin and much creased khaki, arrived at Afion at not infrequent intervals, bringing to receptive ears news of the latest machines and newest stunts.

Some, as in the case of Captain R. Austin† and Lieut. F. Haig, had come down to help comrades in distress, meeting disaster on the ground. Austin had broken a wheel through striking a stone after landing to assist Major Evans, who had come down through engine failure. Before Austin and his observer could drag Evans' machine from the bog into which it had sunk they were attacked by Arabs who took them prisoner, reluctantly handing them over to the Turks after having threatened their lives many times. Evans had already experienced the joys of captivity in Germany, and after a thrilling escape to Switzerland had resumed duty with the R.A.F. in Palestine, where he was unlucky enough to be taken on his first flight over the lines.

A week after their capture, during which Evans had acquired considerable useful information through conversation with German officers and N.C.O.s, Evans escaped while they were halted for the night at Afule, while en route to Damascus.

\* Later Sir Ross Smith, K.B.E., M.C., D.F.C., A.F.C.

† Capt. R. A. Austin, M.C., Australian Flying Corps.

After running some distance he struck out for a range of barren hills whose trackless sides he climbed with difficulty. Remaining on the summit during the day, he was discovered by an Arab shepherd whom he successfully convinced that he was a German aviator who had made a forced landing and was on his way back to the Turkish lines. He was without water for thirty-six hours, but after climbing among loose boulders and travelling throughout the second night he eventually discovered a pool of water and soon afterwards stumbled upon a Turkish camp. After successfully evading the sentries he spent the next day in hiding in a wheat field and was almost ridden over by enemy cavalry next evening as he lay hidden behind a small bush. Darkness and a heavy rainstorm overtook him, when after a long march he was wading up to his armpits through an extensive marsh. With the moon and stars obscured he could only stagger on blindly, but with much striving he reached firm ground and walked for about three hours as fast as he could. His feet were blistered and cut and he had lost the soles of his shoes in the mud of the marshes, and pain and weakness caused him to fall down in a faint. Recovering himself, the moon shining through a gap in the clouds showed that he had come out of the marsh on the same side as he had entered it. Eating his last piece of bread he doggedly returned to the marsh, crossed it and walked until daylight to within ten miles of the British lines. He knew that he could walk no further owing to his exhausted condition and the state of his feet, and realised bitterly that he must receive assistance or give himself up. Near at hand was a Jewish settlement, so knocking at the largest house he made his last bid for freedom and asked for help. The occupants were afraid to help him, locked him up, and informed the Turks! . . .\*

In May 1918 a party of seven arrived from the Palestine front. Five of them were aviators, the remaining two being infantry officers taken in the severe fighting that preceded the capture of Jerusalem. Lieut. Haig† and his observer, Lieut. Challinor, had been taken in the same gallant way as Captain Austin. Seeing a comrade land with engine failure in enemy country, they had come down to assist, but in taking off, with the extra load of two passengers standing upon the lower plane

\* See "The Escaping Club," by Maj. A. J. Evans, M.C.

† Lieut. F. W. Haig and Lieut. R. T. Challinor, Australian Flying Corps.

of their Bristol fighter, the machine had swerved, smashing itself against a heap of stones.

The fifth airman of the party was Captain Alan Bott, better known by his pen name "Contact". "An Airman's Outings", written while on service in France, was the cause of his journey to Palestine for further opportunities of aerial activity and record. Soon after his transfer to the East, in an air fight near Nablous when pursuing a German Rumpler, he was set upon by three enemy scouts and in manœuvring to engage these new foes a lucky shot from the Rumpler pierced his petrol tank and brought him to earth. At Nazareth he had fallen in with the other prisoners of the party, and at Damascus four of them had made elaborate preparations to escape, when they were betrayed by their "half-Greek half-Jew and wholly scoundrel" interpreter-intermediary.

They remained for a week only at Afion before being sent to Constantinople for interrogation. But I was fated to see more of Bott, for once arrived at the capital, where rumours were current of pending exchanges, he and two other wangers secured admission to hospital. There I was destined to meet him some weeks later, a malingerer also.

During May 1918 rumours of an impending exchange of prisoners were so far believed that the then senior Medical Officer at Afion, Major Haughton, began to compile lists of the various prisoners and their real or imagined ailments, with a view to submitting them to the Turkish Medical Board on its arrival. Old injuries and well-healed wounds were promptly remembered, grey hairs were counted, false teeth discarded, and daily a sorry procession wended its way to Haughton's room, where the tales of woe received a solemn hearing and a non-committal diagnosis.

Already Colonel Coventry and Flight-Lieutenant Foster had gone to Constantinople with plausible diseases, and we heard that these two were assured of exchange, though Joe Roberts, one of the few who was not a *malade imaginaire*, had been returned to Afion after weeks of probation in hospital.

Nobody was master of his fate, but stalwart invalids and optimistic wire-pullers alike built on their chances.

In my own case I knew that any report would be unfavourable, for luckily—mainly because I had exercised daily indoors—I had always been fit. . . . Supernaturally it seemed, my

chance came. One evening, preparatory to being locked up, we were lined up for roll-call in front of "Australia House", when the Moullassim announced a message for Vi-at Effendi. Instinctively I counted over my misdeeds and awaited strafing orders, but to my great surprise was told instead that I was to go before the Turkish P.M.O. for medical inspection. There were two other Captains White in the camp and I naturally supposed the message to be for one of them, but on securing the documents I found that both the initials and unit were mine.

The thought of escape to Russia, or the remote possibility of exchange, made me determined to reach Constantinople at all costs. I had not the slightest idea whence the enquiry had come, but nevertheless decided to make the most of it. Unhappily my ankle had completely healed, so much so indeed that a few weeks previously when Major Haughton was seeking an opponent to race him over a hundred yards, a camp championship was promoted with four starters, and I had been the unfortunate winner, a result which entailed the gain of considerable piastres and *raki* by my supporters, and for myself the disability of proving fit immediately before the exchange season.

Trusting that my fame as a sprinter had not reached the P.M.O., but rather that, if I was remembered at all, it was because for a time I had walked on crutches, I decided to develop a "tubercular" ankle. Doc. Brown and a medical book were my guides, and soon by strenuous skipping and the application of bandages the ankle began to show symptoms and the blue weal from the burn to look its best. Luckily for me I had broken my instep years before at football and this asset I was able to turn to good account, as a badly set bone protruded. At night I wound a tight puttee from toe to knee and the result of arrested circulation gave joy to my malingering heart.

A boon companion among the Frenchmen accompanied me as "interpreter", when, with a well-rehearsed limp that was not entirely feigned, and haggard with quinine and cigarettes as well as want of sleep, I hobbled under guard to the hospital. "If you have only to pass Dr. X., an Ottoman Greek, you will have no difficulty," said Lieut. de Vaisseau Bossy, "but the Chief Doctor is a Turk, and ignorant as well as suspicious."

For more than a year, on the advice of the Greek, Bossy had visited the hospital for malaria treatment, the visit eventually developing into interesting talks with the Greek, who was strongly Ententist and always possessed of the latest rumours.

Bossy willingly played the rôle of interpreter in order to give me time to think over my replies. To the pompous and dignified P.M.O., Bossy eloquently pleaded my case, while I stupidly returned the Turk's searching gaze. For two years he had personally known that the wound in my ankle had prevented my taking enough exercise to keep me in good health; lately he had noticed a considerable change in my condition. No doubt my relatives knew and were anxious about the progress of this insidious disease and therefore had cabled this inquiry. It was regrettable that the desired treatment could not be procured in Afion. These and other useful lies and suggestions the Frenchman gave forth. "Montrez-moi," said the Turk, turning suddenly towards me. I looked blankly at him, indicating Bossy as the interpreter. When the question was repeated and interpreted I removed my unlaced boot, tenderly unwinding a long bandage. "Was it tender to the touch?" My grimaces showed that it was. "Was it stiff?" It resisted tolerably well, and as a diversion from practical tests I described the discomfort of sleepless nights and the handicap to health caused by the constant use of a stick. Both doctors were sceptical till a wink to the Greek caused him to show some enthusiasm and to see grave symptoms, though the Turk still seemed unconvinced.

Sighing eloquently, I carefully rewound the bandage, and sensing that the Turk was watching me closely, handled the limb tenderly to the last. Resignedly stumping out after being told that my case was not serious enough for Constantinople, I limped heavily along the straight road to the town till well out of sight of eyes or field glasses.

A week later Bossy learned on visiting hospital that my make-believe had succeeded, and that, after great deliberation and intent study of my progress as I limped back to camp, the Turkish Colonel agreed with the Greek's diagnosis. . . . Thus I was to be sent to Constantinople for treatment.

But more than a month elapsed before I left Afion. Musloun was meantime arrested after his first acquittal, and while he awaited trial a new Commandant reigned in his stead.



A CAÏQUE ON THE BOSPHOROUS : CONSTANTINOPLE.



FOUR INMATES OF "AUSTRALIA HOUSE," IN WELCOME OVERCOATS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, LONDON.



Whether during that time I was under observation, my papers had been lost, or I had merely been forgotten, I do not know, but during the four weeks following the examination I had always to limp, eschew games, and walk with the aid of a stick to keep up the deception.

In the interim, Paul and Yeats-Brown were sent to Constantinople to obtain treatment for exaggerated complaints that concerned a nose and an ear. Very cleverly they had wangled permission to be medically examined by the Turks, and with the strong support of the Greek, they received the necessary authority.

Before their departure I confided to them my plan of escape via Russia, and as I expected to follow in a few days they agreed to wait so that we might escape together.

Expectations of a change of scene were sufficient consolation for an acquired limp; and though my fate still hung in the balance, the last weeks in Afion sped quickly by, in the earnest study of Russian and Turkish and in close consultation with Kaimbani.

*Enfin* the happy day arrived, and with orders to catch the evening train I packed up feverishly, bequeathed my home-made furniture to my room-mates, and after celebrating at a minimum of convivial send-offs from generous well-wishers, left in an arabah for the railway station.

Trooper Richardson, a sturdy Light Horseman who was orderly at "Australia House", was permitted to accompany me to the station owing to my "infirmity". He would have given his eyes to come with me, and having proved himself to be a stout fellow and a passable Turkish scholar, I realised he would have been a most useful companion.

Crowds of women and children were squatting with their bundles outside the station with that splendid disregard for time and time-tables that is so typically Eastern. Half-an-hour later the already overcrowded train drew in, upon which with much shrieking and screaming the motley crowd attempted to clamber on. Bundles of clothing and bags of flour were pushed through windows or placed upon the platforms of the train, only to be violently thrown back on the track, sometimes accompanied by their owners and always with recriminations.

A railway official tried to find a seat for me and my guard, and after struggling through the seething crowd that blocked



the car platform, was wrenching at a door, when by the violent contortions of the floor beneath me I discovered that I was not standing on bundles of old clothes but upon the body of a man who was lying at the door, and whose expositions had been drowned in the general din. The compartment reeked with smoke and the stench of days of overcrowding, its occupants, a party of Turkish officers, fiercely refusing me entrance. As my baggage had found an abiding place on the train I decided at all costs to find a place, in spite of the railway official's advice to wait until the next day. Seeing two Jews in European dress, I accosted them and asked if they knew of any compartment where there was room. Much to my delight they replied that there was standing accommodation in theirs. Forcing my way through the mass of humanity at the end of the carriage I espied an empty seat and promptly took it, though well knowing that someone would eventually lay claim to it. Next to me was a Greek who knew a few words of French and immediately began to assure me that his sympathies were Ententist. I considered it advisable to humour him as he might possibly be a companion of the owner of the seat, so treated him to a denunciation of the Turks and the time-worn prophecy that the war would soon end in our favour. I was becoming used to the blended aroma of garlic and tobacco, when much to my surprise a red-fezzed head appeared outside the window and asked politely in good English if I would see that nobody stole the baggage that was beside me. At the moment I was capable of promising anything, and said I would guard it as my life. Ishmael, my sailor sentry, evicted somebody close at hand and we settled down to await the dawn and the train's departure. Sleep was impossible owing to the unwelcome attention of swarms of voracious bugs and lice. Towards dawn, when the fighting and shrieking commenced to die down, the owner of the English voice reappeared, and a battle of politeness ensued between him and the Greek regarding the seat. Eventually, after much gesticulation and volubility, the English-speaking Greek remained, the other departing to seek a place elsewhere.

As the overburdened train jerked out of the station at 4 a.m. the din recommenced. Some unfortunate travellers with their bundles hurtling after them, were thrown off the train by the ticket collectors, while others squeezed surreptitiously aboard

or hung precariously on the carriage steps. Shouting, clanging and whistling crescendoed to a veritable pandemonium as we drew out on the Anatolian plain at the break of day. Soon Afion Kara Hissar and its castled rock disappeared in the blue haze of the morning.

DAWN IN ANATOLIA

(By kind permission of the "Sydney Bulletin")

On tomb-like stillness dawns the day  
Where in the East a feeble ray  
Peers through Night's starry mantle spread  
In seamless blackness overhead.

It gleams, and grows, and climbs apace,  
Far up the sky; and soon the face  
Of Nature semi-veiled and still  
Shows dim and blurred, in field and hill.

In silent, sure, and steady rout  
The sickly stars go slowly out  
Though not a sound of beast nor bird,  
Nor human voice, can yet be heard.

Until far off a crowing cock  
As if the silence he would mock,  
A morning challenge shrills around  
That gains replies from bird and hound.

Then others throw the challenge down  
Till bark and bay all round the town  
And cocks a-crowing hard and fast  
Declare the world alive at last.

And birds in arbours in the trees  
Their leafy haunts swayed by the breeze  
That rustles gently through the corn  
With noisy chatter greet the dawn.

The glowing lights mount up the sky,  
A gleaming amber climbing high  
Above the grey and sullen shades  
Where blended earth with heaven fades.

The *muezzins* from the mosque tops call  
Their trilly chants, that rise and fall,  
And mingle echoing everywhere,  
Exhorting men to bow in prayer.

A ragged cloud, wind frayed and torn  
But golden-fringed, and seeming shorn  
From some gemm'd tapestry on high,  
Unravels on the Eastern sky.

A row of trees far down the plain  
That seemed to merge some rustic lane  
Transforms to camels, gaunt and slow,  
In sauntering, swaying, tinkling row.

The sun peeps up, a blaze of gold  
All radiant faced, round-eyed and bold;  
At which long shadows grey with fright  
Start creeping slyly out of sight.

Some country carts creak down the road  
Their oxen straining at the load,  
And drivers urging them along  
With raucous shouts, and snatch of song.

A squawking starling in the eaves  
Awakes his mates; then swiftly leaves,  
On plunder bent amid the corn,  
While yet the day is barely born.

With clatter of clogs and noisy shout  
The little children now come out,  
But these droll girls and sad-eyed boys  
Know few of Western childrens' joys.

And peasants, men and women too,  
Bizarre, be-trousered, bronzed of hue  
Waist-deep in cornfields may be seen,  
Afloat on shimmering seas of green.

And now the doors up in the town  
Commence to open. And a-down  
The narrow, crudely-cobbled street,  
Come softly shuffling, slippered feet.

And dowdy women, veiled and stout,  
With just one dark eye peeping out  
Beneath great folds of sombre cloth  
Like clumsy crows, come walking forth.

And unshaved men in ill-made suits  
And scarlet fez, and unbrushed boots  
With scarce a happy face in ten  
Strut past with mien of aldermen.

T. W. W.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CONSTANTINOPLE

**A**S I leaned out of the window and watched Afion's castled rock melt into the distance, I felt like a felon released from long imprisonment. Mentally I pictured my comrades in the camp waking to yet another dreary dawn within its shadow; and from the bottom of my heart I pitied them.

The future, wrapped in mystery, beckoned invitingly, and elated as if bound for home I breathed deeply in the freer atmosphere whilst feasting my eyes upon the beauties of the unfolding panorama. Cornfields with peasant women busy with scythe and sickle, leafy wooded oases in the brown wilderness, and villages of red-roofed houses which looked cool and inviting among poplars and sycamores, flashed past at a pace that seemed terrifying after the buffalo-drawn traffic of Afion.

There seemed no reason why the war should not continue for years longer. In July 1918 few could have prophesied that within four months Bulgaria, Austria, Turkey and Germany would successively sue for peace. For the Turks the situation had greatly improved, for Baghdad and Jerusalem are remote from Constantinople and the pulse of the nation, and the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Asia Minor since the Bolshevik peace, had compensated for the territory lost in Mesopotamia and Palestine. The Turks had, in fact, so far profited by the Russian withdrawal—which through the Bolshevik rising gave away what Russia had gained with much sacrifice—that they commenced to overrun Trans-Caucasia, capturing Batoum, Kars and Ardahan, even penetrating as far as Baku, while they were at that time actually negotiating for the acquisition of the Crimea.

With the English-speaking Greek (it would be injudicious even now to mention his name), I discussed the situation from

all points of view and was firmly convinced from the report of the recent determined offensive by the Germans in Flanders that the end of the war and the crushing of Germany was not yet. This conviction strengthened my resolve to escape, and to that end I passed the two days and nights of the journey to Constantinople in questioning my newly-made acquaintance regarding the Turkish capital and its possibilities.

Eski-Schehir, which in ancient days was the scene of an early triumph of the First Crusade, seemed a hustling city after the dullness of antediluvian Afion. The Greek persuaded Ishmael to allow me to visit the town in order to see some of its famous meerschaum shops and to eat at a celebrated Austrian tea house, which travellers have extolled as the one European café in Asia Minor.

It was a pleasure indeed to sit at a table with a clean white cloth; but the treat of two small cakes and a cup of coffee (with something more substantial for Ishmael) cost the generous Greek nearly two pounds.

The country onwards was typical of the Anatolia which Lamartine has so ably described, and Boz-Oyuk, a little town of white walls and red roofs, was typical of his roseate word pictures that depict the beautiful and omit the squalid. Enormous mulberry and walnut trees embowered gardens that were a maze of colour, and towering poplars added to the pleasant picture of repose and contentment. Rustic brushwood fences and rudely built kiosks of weather-stained wood completed the idyllic scene.

Karakeuy, a little village where our train rested the second night, was such another Eden. There I sought the outer air and the sight of trees and birds and sound of trickling water until Ishmael drove me indoors. In the vitiated atmosphere of the train, while the Greek shivered and chattered with fever, I spent a wakeful night trying to lessen the onslaughts of vermin with the aid of a candle and tin of Keatings. I made the unpleasant discovery that the woodwork of the train housed legions of bugs, while the descendants of the lice that embarrassed Pharaoh were also travelling, and on these hardy types the insect powder acted merely as a tonic.

Dawn found us skirting the waters of an enchanting lake. Amid the foliage that grew to the water's edge we stopped at a leaf-embowered station, where pretty children were selling

tiny baskets of early peaches and strings of yellow apples which looked like necklaces of giant amber beads.

Having spent some years in cotton mills in Lancashire the Greek was a devoted admirer of the English, which led him so far as to offer me a substantial sum of money in case I should need it when escaping.

The money I refused, not knowing if Fate would allow me to repay him. But I was not so backward in accepting the choice food he offered me, and which was of a quality I had not known in Turkey. Of this I ate the lion's share, conscience free, in the knowledge that malaria had taken his appetite away. On shortbread and *crème de menthe* I dined sumptuously—ably assisted by Ishmael, to whom such delicacies were unknown—blessing the while the ancestry and seed of Nicholas P.

At Ishmidt, where for the first time for over three years I saw the sea—"the sight of salt-water unbounded,"—the Greek detained to rest a week before going to Constantinople. He gave me his Constantinople address, inviting me to call if it were possible, and again offering to lend me money.

As we waited some hours at this delightful spot, on the pretext of requiring matches I persuaded Ishmael to accompany me to the bazaar. The houses of Ishmidt rise in terraces above the clear still waters of the Gulf, on whose unruffled surface ancient barques rode at anchor and were mirrored in its glassy depths. Brightly painted *caiques* flitted from point to point; orchards grew to the water's edge, and a broad avenue that led from the town to the seashore was canopied with the leafy arms of giant sycamores. Peace and contentment pervaded the scene . . . I bought some matches and almost forgetting to limp, returned light-heartedly to the train. Bug bites had no sting, the garlic and the great unwashed were unnoticed. Pulling out my tobacco box I rolled a cigarette *a la Turquie*, to find that the shopkeeper had sold me dead matches.

After some hours of skirting the coast line, the blue waters of the Gulf of Ishmidt opened into the Sea of Marmora, and soon we drew in sight of Constantinople.

The Turkish capital, whatever its pretensions from the seaward side, is neither imposing nor beautiful when approached on the route of the Anatolian railway. Suburbia at first

consists of gaudily-painted wooden houses, many of which are large and stand in spacious grounds, with shuttered windows from which pretty girls with unveiled faces peeped down upon the train. Then follows an extensive burnt-out area, where whole blocks of houses had been destroyed in one of those mysterious conflagrations that caused such havoc in the Turkish capital, and which an inefficient fire-fighting service and haphazard building make possible. . . . And so to the terminus at Haidar Pasha.

My destination was the Haidar Pasha Hospital, a large rambling barracks, famous as the scene of the labours of Florence Nightingale and the burial ground of many Crimean soldiers.

Ishmael declared that my baggage had been stolen by a Bashi-bazouk, but not being satisfied with his explanation I expostulated to such effect that a Turkish Bimbashi of Cavalry, who no doubt judged my importance from the vehemence of my language, kindly instituted a search, which resulted in my box being salvaged, while the deference he paid my ragged khaki, which I had resurrected for the trip, made me feel as magnificent as a newly-fledged subaltern first being saluted by the Horse Guards.

After dividing what food I had among some starving Serbians who had been sent from Austria to die, I hired a Kurdish porter to carry my kit, and with my best limp walked to hospital, where I bade the bovine Ishmael good-bye.

Two villainous-looking orderlies pounced on my kit, at which I took out any articles likely to arouse their cupidity. An Armenian checked it before it was whisked off to quarantine, the arch ruffian of the orderlies, one Ramazan, unsuccessfully demanding my money. A doctor looked at the papers that Ishmael had furnished, ordered me a bath, much to my delight, and after being issued with a nightshirt and slippers I was escorted along rambling corridors to a dimly-lit soldiers' ward.

No cradle-song was necessary to lull me to slumber after two nights of sleeplessness in the train, but soon I was rudely awakened by a cannonade and rattle of machine guns without and pandemonium within the hospital. Sentries and orderlies scampered along the dark corridors, while sick and wounded



men crept painfully from their beds, the crash of bombs and roar of guns adding to the confusion.

Realising that it was a British air-raid, I wished the airmen good shooting and like Brer Rabbit "lay low and sed nuthin!" When all had disappeared except a groaning gendarme who had been shot in the stomach, I climbed on to a window ledge to view the sight, which with the sweeping arms of searchlights and the bursting of shells looked very impressive. A one-armed man appeared out of the darkness, and until the firing ceased I spent an instructive hour or so, while in perfect French, the soldier—who proved to be a conscripted Jew—pointed out the various features of the city and the harbour as they were illumined by the searchlights.

Next morning three doctors examined my ankle, which owing to neglect was beginning to look confoundedly well. They were not greatly impressed, but on finding me in a ward with Turkish *askers*, had me removed to the officers' ward.

Five Arab and three Turkish officers occupied the other beds, the patient next me being a groaning fanatic who had been hoist by his own petard through falling on a bomb at the Military Academy. All day I listened to their conversation in order to select the most companionable that I might further my plans. Ostentatiously I was negotiating with an orderly for the purchase of tobacco and cigarette papers, when an Arab Moulassim two beds away proffered me a cigarette. I thanked him and enquired about his injuries, whereupon in halting French he told me the story of his accident through a petrol explosion; his travels in India and various other parts of the British Empire and his intention of taking the earliest opportunity of becoming a British subject. The wounded cadet glowered and cursed as we conversed across him, and each time I hobbled across to the Arab for further cigarettes he raised his voice in protest.

From the Arab I learned that six British officers were in the hospital of Gumush Suyu, on the European side of the Bosphorous. And after ascertaining by further questioning that there was an X-ray apparatus at that hospital and none at Haidar Pasha, I saw a way of reaching Gumush Suyu and companionship.

Next morning the *chef d'hôpital* informed me that after the inspection of my foot and ankle the doctors agreed that

the limb was not tubercular. "How can they make such a statement without having X-rayed it?" I asked in an aggrieved tone. "But we have no X-rays," he protested. "Not here, but it is well known that there is a most complete apparatus at Gumush Suyu. Why should I not be sent there?" He shook his head and turned the conversation into other channels.

From a criticism of the German aerial defence of Constantinople I gathered that he shared the dislike of so many of the Turks for their ally. Considering the ground safe I forthwith extolled the skill of Turkish doctors to the detriment of their German brethren, which sop to his professional vanity increased his *bonhomie* and led to further talk. "Do you know Jo-ness Effendi?" he enquired. "The madman?" I asked. "His is a sad case." . . . "Yes, it is a pity that one so talented should lose his reason. He is in this hospital." I expressed surprise. "Could I see him?" He laughed. "No, he hates the English and has changed his name to 'Hassan oghlou (son of) Ahmed'." Encouraged, he narrated some of Lieut. Jones' amazing doings, unconsciously paying a great tribute to Jones' clever deception and giving valuable corroboration (if such were needed) of that officer's unique record of his wonderful exploits. "He has learned Turkish so well that he speaks with a perfect accent, and, when there is an air-raid, he struggles to get down to shoot the English aeroplane. For one so clever it is a pity—a great pity."

When he left me I fancied that the doctor's sympathy for Britishers through his regard for Jones was further heightened by my flattery. My optimism was realised the same day when I learned that my case had been reviewed and that instead of being packed off to Afion I was to go to Gumush Suyu.

So interested was I in the doings of Jones, whom both Britishers and Turks had declared to be mad, that I decided to see him before my departure. Slipping out of the ward I wandered about the dormitories together with numbers of other ghost-like night-shirted figures in search of him. But though in my perambulations I think I entered every ward and scrutinised a host of faces I saw nobody resembling an Englishman. . . . Perhaps you saw me first, Jones?

Ramazan or his accomplice had souvenired my pipe, a mug and a mirror, otherwise my kit was intact. In the custody of an elderly soldier I was sent to the ferry for the European

shore. Before leaving, the sick Arab had tried to dissuade me from going to Gumush Suyu, where he declared my "infirmity" would not be properly treated, and he even went so far as to write to the hospital chief asking that I should be permitted to remain.

From the deck of the ferry I was able to appreciate the beauties of Constantinople, which have been extolled by travellers through the ages. The idyllic village of Kadikeuy that smudged into indistinctness behind us was once the ancient city of Chalcedon. Out of the distance, as we approached the European shore, Stamboul and Galata unfolded their immortal landmarks :—

" Column, tower, and dome, and spire  
Shine like obelisks of fire,  
Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean  
To the sapphire-tinted skies."

Unlike the crude edifices of Anatolia, slender minarets rose from marble mosques that crowded for position upon the seven hills of Mohammedan Stamboul, where once stood ancient Byzantium and the Constantinople of the Romans, broken walls and the majestic mosque of St. Sophia alone attesting its former greatness.

Facing Stamboul, and separated from it by the estuary of the Golden Horn, commercial Galata took shape among its maze of shipping beneath the overshadowing hills of residential Pera. To the left sparkled the broad waters of the Marmora, and away to the right the silvery Bosphorus tapered out of sight amid villas, kiosks and terraced gardens, with busy ferry steamers darting in and out of picturesque coves, strange sailing craft lumbering along, and innumerable *caiques* dotting its glassy surface.

My attention was attracted to mundane things when a fanatical-looking Turk, taking an unfriendly interest in me, endeavoured to work up an agitation against me among his fellow passengers. Muttering and glaring menacingly, he gathered a few enthusiasts around me, including two wild-eyed Arabs who gesticulated and showed their teeth, but nothing further eventuated and I concluded that I was the object of his

affection owing to the last air-raid. A more enterprising ruffian, however, tried to make off with my baggage as we approached the landing stage, and was already engaged in a willing bout of catch-as-catch-can with my rather ancient custodian before I saw him. Much to my surprise, instead of showing further fight, a heavy and well directed kick from me upon a vulnerable spot settled the difference in the *posta's* favour, the would-be thief disappearing hurriedly into the crowd.

The paved streets, the noise and the traffic of Galata, "the loud lamplitten city, shops and the changing crowd" were good to see and hear—for one can get too far away from civilisation, if not too near to nature. Like a gratified Rip van Winkle I prolonged the walk to Gumush Suyu by making the most of my limp and seeking a shave in order to pick up the prattle of the bazaars from the unfailing source of the barber.

Arrived at the barrack-like hospital at Gumush Suyu, which derives its name, "Silver Waters," from the almost perpetual sheen on the Bosphorus which it overlooks, I was placed in a ward containing eight beds. Much to my joy I found myself among British officers, for in one of the two occupied beds was Lieut. Clifton, late A.D.C. to General Townshend, whom I had seen passing through Afion to the parole camp. "Where are the others?" I asked, for besides a long-haired unkempt figure that sat with its head in its hands, four other beds appeared to have been lately occupied. Clifton explained that as it was Sunday the hospital authorities had permitted them to go for a walk, under escort, but that as he had recently undergone an operation for a certain (totally imagined) malady he was not able to accompany them.

"Where is Hill?" I enquired, for the doctor at Haidar Pasha had mentioned that Jones' partner was at Gumush Suyu. "That is he," whispered C., indicating the forlorn figure in the corner whom I had supposed to be a demented Turk.

I stared in amazement, for I had never seen so woe-begone an object. His unkempt hair grew almost to his shoulders and was lost in an untidy beard. His face was drawn and sunken, his jaw dropped, and his body thin and wasted. A small Bible lay open upon his drawn-up knees and with his pallid face resting in his skinny hands he alternately sobbed and moaned. "What a consummate actor," I thought, with the

admiration of the amateur malingerer for the master, and I sat down to observe and admire a man whose fortitude and will power could carry him so far.

"Don't speak to him," said C. "He's quite mad. We've all tried to talk to him but he won't talk. He's got religious mania."

I had no intention of speaking to him at the moment for his bed being next to mine I knew there was plenty of time. Remembering the tribute the Turks paid him in the *Hilal* at the time of his capture\*, I could not believe him to be insane, particularly as religious mania was not a popular complaint among active service Australians.

Hill's temperature chart showed me that he either had recourse to drugs to aid his make-believe or was very ill, so I resolved to help him in any way I could.

In order to amuse the promenaders, most of whom I knew, C. and I concocted a story regarding my indentivity, calculated to arouse their interest. Very soon we heard voices in the corridor and I hid beneath the sheet. "Hello," said a voice I recognised, "who is the new patient?" "Hush," said C., "he's been badly hit. He was shot down in the air-raid last week." The voices dropped to a whisper and "What's his name?" asked another. "He didn't tell me," said C., "but I believe he's an Australian." "An Australian?" said an excited voice, "from what part?" "Is there a place called Longreach?" asked C., innocently. "Longreach!" almost shouted the voice. "That is my home town. I'm sure to know him. Here, Miles, you can read this script, what name does it say?" and as two or three forms bent sympathetically over me another commenced to lift the sheet and peeping in received a puff of smoke for his solicitude. There were roars of laughter and I should have been dragged out of bed but for the arrival of one of the wardsmen.

All except Lieut. Withers, who was badly wounded in the arm, suffered from imagined infirmities, and all except Miles, whose robust figure made his pretence the more ludicrous,

\* From the *Hilal* of June 1st, 1916.

"Un Aviateur Anglais à Damas. Le journal 'El Chark' de Damas écrit: l'aviateur Australien Hol faisant son service dans l'armée anglaise, a pris son vol de Kantara près du Canal, et a survolé le désert pour faire de reconnaissances. Une panne survenue en cours de route l'obligea à atterrir. Quelques habitants du désert ont accouru sur les lieux pour le capturer, mais il opposa une résistance acharnée qui a duré six heures. Finalement il a dû se rendre. Cet aviateur a été amené à Damas."



CAPT. ALAN BOTT, M.C. "CONTACT."



admitted their imposition. The remaining two were Captains Bott and Rutherford, who as previously mentioned had wangled their way into hospital after being sent to Constantinople for interrogation. Bott had managed to remain in hospital through well-feigned "melancholia, nervous fits and vertigo", while Rutherford, who had been badly wounded on Gallipoli and also later while flying in Palestine, hoped that his long-healed wounds might "ope their ruby lips, to beg the voice and utterance of his tongue". His sham was a much more comfortable though less convincing one than Hill's, for, on the pretence of the wounds causing swelling in the leg after exercise, he was taken almost daily for short constitutionals, the leg being measured both before and after walking, though to his amusement the simple hospital assistant did not take the circumference of the limb but measured its length instead!

At sunset, as the *muezzins* from the minarets commenced their plaintive evening prayers, Hill rose silently from his bed, and kneeling on the floor, clasped his arms in reverential attitude and commenced to pray. Bowing his head to the floor, he touched it repeatedly with his forehead, raised his arms to the East, slapped his thighs, and completed all the gymnastic postures of the Mohammedan *namaz*, repeating meanwhile in a doleful voice the ritual of the Church of England Prayer Book. "He does this night and morning," someone said. It was at an auspicious moment, I thought, for at this hour the wardsmen were bringing our "tchorba"—a watery soup containing rice and sometimes a suspicion of meat—and they could not fail to notice him.

After "lights out" I lay awake for some hours, determined to find if I could render Hill any assistance. Judging by snores and deep breathing that my companions were asleep, at about 2 a.m., I stole to Hill's bed, and finding him sleepless I took his hand and whispered close to his ear that I did not believe that he was mad, but that I could see he was very ill, and that as a fellow Australian I insisted on helping him. Mentioning also that I had a tin of butter, a tin of milk, sugar and a packet of cocoa in my kit, which I had received the day I left Afion, I offered to diet him with these foods if he would allow me.

Half expecting an irrational answer, as except for his prayers he had not spoken for months, I was thankful to hear a sane reply. "I have been very ill with dysentery," he whis-



pered, after a pause, "and being neglected am in a pretty bad way. I would be glad of a little of your food, but do not speak to me. We can correspond with notes that can be got rid of in the lavatory."

Next morning, as the Turkish orderlies were sweeping the ward, Hill again commenced his devotions, the sweeping going on around and under him as much as his postures would allow. I tapped my forehead and the fat orderly Ibrahim who caught my eye giggled and nodded knowingly. Thereafter it was easy to induce Ibrahim to bring me Hill's bread to be buttered, which I gave him without saying a word. It was also taken as a matter of course that I should make cocoa for him, which also gave me the opportunity of doctoring him with opium pills that I had received among the sugar in a parcel.

In a few days I had the satisfaction of seeing a little colour come into his wasted cheeks and the temperature graph above his head ceased to zigzag.

Whenever I saw his eyes fixed on me I knew that a screwed-up note lay on the floor, and dropping my "tchorba" bowl or spoon as a pretext so that the wardsmen should suspect nothing I would lean out of bed, pick up the note and read it under the sheets or spread out in a Russian grammar. "I shall ask you to pray with me to-night," one note read. "Please curse me heartily and complain to the doctors about it. Ask the Dutch Legation if they visit the hospital again to get me a Bible with larger print. This one is blinding me." I had tried to induce him to give up this excessive mortification of the flesh, asserting that if he did not die of the treatment he was receiving he would probably go out of his mind through the continuance of his dissembling. "I have made up my mind to persist to the end, if it kills me," he wrote. "Maybe I am not so far from being mad already. Watch my eyes when I pray!" And when next he bent in prayer I saw what I had not noticed before, that continued silence, sickness, underfeeding and ceaseless deception had so combined to upset his nerves that he could not keep his eyes closed, his eyelids persistently blinking and twitching.

Hill chose his time well on the occasion when he asked me to pray with him. Lights had been extinguished long enough for black silence to reign without our having had time to fall asleep, when I heard a movement in his bed and a sepulchral

voice beside me said, "Will you come and pray with me?" Every bed in the ward creaked expectantly, and their occupants were not disappointed, for I cursed him loud and long. Whisperings that lasted far into the night showed that our exchange of pleasantries had not been in vain.

My protégé apologised next morning for having troubled me at night, declaring that he would issue his next invitation by day, but at the same time he exhorted me to be a little more vehement in my refusal. With bowl and spoon we were seated at table when like a tall ghost he rose from his bed and slowly approached, with open mouth and haggard eyes eloquently declaring him mad. Like Banquo's appearance at the feast, the meal was forgotten, while patients and wardsmen awaited the result open-eyed. "Will you come and pray with me?" he asked in a toneless voice. Seizing a "tchorba" bowl I threatened to hurl it at him if he did not instantly return to bed. He meekly obeyed, whereupon my reputation was enhanced in Turkish eyes, though my methods were not altogether approved by my comrades.

My power over him was further demonstrated a few days later when Ibrahim and his assistant were endeavouring to coerce him into having a bath, by the doctor's orders. They had shorn him of his ragged hair and beard, but after repeatedly getting him out of bed he would climb back again and continue to pore over his Bible. At length they gave up in disgust, determined to report him at the earliest opportunity. Observing that Hill was watching me, I looked for and found a crumpled note, which read—"For God's sake make me have a bath!" Approaching the peeved Ibrahim I asked him if I should use my influence with the madman, and forthwith like a splenetic sergeant-major chiding a recruit I succeeded in inducing him to obey. Picking up my stick I shambled off down the long corridor behind him with a blessing from the astonished Ibrahim. And in a secluded alcove within the domed vault of the Turkish bath we were able to enjoy our first tête-à-tête.

There was constant rumour of an exchange of prisoners, and poor Hill, whose chances lay in an unswerving continuance of his deception, in sickness and in health, had undertaken a colossal task in attempting to arouse sufficient sympathy to warrant an exchange on compassionate grounds. Large pro-

mises and smooth excuses are attributes of the Turk, and though one badly wounded officer and twenty-two men had recently been sent to Switzerland it did not follow that there would be sufficient consistency on the part of the Turks to permit the despatch of others. That Hill and Jones ultimately succeeded, after six months of almost intolerable misery, speaks volumes for their ingenuity and superhuman endurance. As a melancholic, Hill—who played the more uncomfortable rôle—was grossly neglected by the doctors of Gumush Suyu when in a critical condition, in an effort to make him complain. That stern measures are necessary for malingerers must be admitted, but to deny medicines to a man who was obviously in dire need was unpardonably callous and typical of the Turk.

There were lesser malingerers at Gumush Suyu, and an English-speaking Armenian malingered in the easiest though most expensive way. According to his story he had twice paid the requisite sum for military exemption, but had finally been mobilised and sent to work in a coal mine near the Russian front. Believing his days were numbered he bribed an officer to allow him to proceed to Constantinople to bring some horses to the front, but once in the capital managed by a generous disbursement of backsheesh to secure admission to hospital on the score of eye trouble. There he had ignobly remained for two years at an expense of no less than 2000 liras (£1800), which was spent in quarterly bribes to the oculist and the aurist for recommending him for further retention in hospital.

Compared with Hill or the Armenian we were petty malingerers, and though using our pretended infirmities as a cloak for our designs, we decided to make the most of them should exchange opportunity come our way.

Bott had found the simulation of nervous fits and vertigo too trying for long continuance, but a seemingly unwitting confession that he was a cousin of Mr. Lloyd George, who, in the eyes of the Turks, loomed large as a Cæsarian Controller General of all the Allies, proved a better make-believe and gained him the untinted friendship and respect of Aziz Bey, a young doctor whose daily duty was to report upon the condition of patients.

Lessons in English from so distinguished a personage appealed to the susceptibilities of this aspiring youth, and Bott

ran no immediate danger of being discharged from hospital if Aziz's good offices could prevent it.

My own infirmities were unfortunately judged upon their merits, and even blows on the ankle with my stick and vigorous jumping on one foot when the wardsmen were absent failed to keep it properly indisposed. A perfectly horizontal temperature chart further betrayed me. I had expected to find Paul and Yeats-Brown at Gumush Suyu and anticipated furthering the escape scheme to Russia that I had outlined to them at Afion.

On arrival at Gumush Suyu I learned that they had been sent from Haidar Pasha to Psamatia, preparatory to return to Afion. I was not surprised therefore when a few days later it was announced that they had daringly escaped.

Successfully wangling Colonel Coventry out of his room by allusions to its discomforts—the self-same room from which Colonel Newcombe had made his first attempt—they escaped by night to an adjacent roof and let themselves down by a rope to the street. Fuel was added to the Colonel's indignation at the thought of his exchange for imagined maladies being prejudiced by their escape, when the Turks accused him of being privy to the plot through changing quarters with them. This, to the anti-escape Colonel, was the unkindest cut of all.

Their departure led me to approach Bott for comradeship, for at Afion he had been in strong opposition to the parole givers and those who held that escape from Turkey was impossible.

To my surprise I found that he was already planning to escape and like myself only lacked an accomplice. In an adjoining ward was a Bosnian aviator who had been shot down in Palestine and was almost recovered from his wound. During a promenade in the hospital grounds he had met Captain Miles, and confessed to him that some day he would desert the Turks and fly to the British lines, but that before he left he required a letter of recommendation to the British so that he would not be treated as a prisoner. He asked Miles if he would write such a note. Miles refused, but shortly before leaving Gumush Suyu for Psamatia he informed Bott.

At the stage when I appeared upon the scene Bott was elaborating plans—during pretended English lessons—to fly with the prospective deserter to Mudros, where a section of the British Naval Air Service was stationed. I unbosomed

myself of my precious Russian scheme and Bott having declared his willingness to accompany me if the aeroplane venture failed, we decided to concentrate upon the aeroplane escape as the quicker of accomplishment, with the Russian plan as an alternative.

There was much to recommend the Bosnian's plan, for a few hours' flight would bring us to the island of Mudros and freedom, whereas the route via Russia was likely to (and did) occupy months.

"John Willie"—as we named the Bosnian for the benefit of eavesdropping Turks—was heartily sick of the Turks, and as his mother was American and a brother was serving in the American Army, his one resolve was to quit Turkey and become a citizen of the United States. We promised him this blessing and his fare to America if he would do as we bid. And after many meetings in the walled garden, when Bott ostentatiously translated phrases from the Bosnian's German grammar while I unobtrusively kept watch, the following plan was formulated:—

"John Willie" anticipated being discharged from hospital and sent to the German aerodrome at San Stefano in a week's time. We were to escape and take train or walk to San Stefano during the following week when the Bosnian would see to it that he was detailed for orderly duty. He supplied us with a pencilled map of the aerodrome and indicated a small wood in which we were to hide. Each morning during the round of his orderly duty he would take a machine into the air and land near this wood, keeping his engine going. If we succeeded in reaching the wood we were to dash out, climb into the cockpit and he would head for the coast. Before escaping we were to await a stunting exhibition which he would give over the roof of the prison at Psamatia, to which place we expected soon to be transferred.

Unfortunately for our plotting, the card house of our hopes fell to the ground when the Turks became suspicious of the Bosnian and forbade him to speak to us.

Being indiscreet and feckless, he had evidently told one of the fifty crippled Tommies in the hospital of his intention to escape with us. Soon it was an open secret and our chances were freely discussed. Knowing that it only required the conversation of any of them to be overheard by an English-speaking

Turk for our attempt to be thwarted, we decided that "John Willie" was too unstable and irresponsible an ally to be trusted; and when he suddenly disappeared we abandoned the scheme in favour of the stowaway trip to Russia.

The Sunday following my entry to hospital we were able to further our plans when permission was given to Rutherford, Bott and myself to promenade under guard outside the hospital grounds. Stamboul was taboo, but a generous distribution of backshish between our two sentries overcame this restriction, and a welcome walk through Pera and across the Galata bridge brought us to the Maritza Café, a mean but popular eating-house in a narrow busy thoroughfare.

There, in an atmosphere of garlic and intrigue, I made the acquaintance of Theodore, the Greek waiter, a little blue-spectacled weasel of a man who spoke every continental tongue. Rutherford spoke no French, so Bott and I were safe in discussing our plans openly with Theodore after the guard had been found a seat out of earshot and served with a steaming *pilaf*. Satisfied with his integrity as a conspirator, I threw all my cards on the table, and while examining the menu pointed enquiringly to a certain dish and quietly told him that we meant to escape to the *Batoum* and would be glad of his help. He evinced not the slightest surprise but gesticulated as if in explanation of the menu and asked how he might be of assistance. Ordering some food and leaving a lira within reach which he flicked out of sight with the deftness of a conjurer, I told him I would reveal more on his return.

On the grimy pages of a tattered diary in my possession is the record of that Falstaffian feast:

"Constantinople August 4th 1918.

Omelette	25	piastres.
Chop	28	"
Bread	18	"
Steak	28	"
Wine	80	"
Stewed apricots	20	"
Third share of posta's feed	87	"
Melon	15	"

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201 piastres—81/10."

Food was dear, but it was good and plentiful at the Maritza, and as the record shows, the change from our starvation rations led us to make up for opportunities lost in the past. Frequent references to the menu while the waiting Theodore rubbed his hands or flicked imaginary crumbs from the discoloured tablecloth were excellent cover for conversation, and when at last our guards hustled us into the street, Theodore had promised to make our intentions known to the engineers of the *Batoum* when next they visited the Maritza, while on his own behalf he undertook to see what he could do in the matter of finding us a hiding-place in Constantinople.

Backshish and repletion so warmed the hearts and stomachs of our guards that for the rest of the day I was able to persuade them to let us go where we chose. Seeking the Hotel Impériale, we surprised Nicholas P., my Greek friend of the journey from Afion, by visiting him and by arrangement met him later in the Petits Champs, where like small boys at a party we further gorged ourselves at his expense with olive-studded salads and coffee, while we talked, smoked and watched the passing crowd. Beneath shady planes and acacias and festoons of coloured lights, a moderately bad band discoursed immoderately ancient music, and as we watched the gay and well dressed heterogeneous throng, pretty unveiled Turkish women, attractive Greeks and Armenians, swaggering German, Turkish and Austrian officers in resplendent uniforms—we lived in a seventh heaven of transient freedom and content.

Our day of truancy brought our residence at Gumush Suyu to an abrupt end.

We were told that our behaviour had been reported by police spies and that in future there were to be no more walks, moreover we were to be turned out of hospital forthwith.

During our perambulations in nightshirts in the walled garden we had thoroughly reconnoitred the possibilities of escape from Gumush Suyu and found that there was little prospect of success owing to its high walls and numerous guards. We rejoiced, therefore, as we considered the chances from Psamatia were greater. Only old Withers, with his wounded arm, and Major Brett, who had lost an eye before the war, had any real claim to be in hospital, but we were surprised to learn that Hill was to be sent to Psamatia, as he was still very ill.

I was entrusted with the distribution of his clothes from

quarantine, and, after he was dressed in an out-at-elbows coat, a very tattered rag hat, and the most thoroughly creased and disreputable trousers I had ever seen, we helped him downstairs after vainly protesting against his being moved from hospital.

In the courtyard stood a small springless four-wheeler for our baggage. As Hill could not walk and requests for an arabah were only answered by threats, he was placed upon a narrow ledge in front of the cart. He told me afterwards that the four hours' drive which followed was his most awful experience. He had lost five stone in weight since he had commenced to feign madness and as the springless waggon jolted over the roughly cobbled streets, he suffered the most excruciating pain. The driver of the vehicle walked, and as the donkeys had no reins and the cart was brakeless they clattered down the hilly streets at a breakneck pace, while Hill, in imminent danger of falling off and being run over, held on desperately with all the strength he could muster.

Bott, Rutherford and myself were taken by a shorter route in the custody of three soldiers. They were complacent fellows but were determined not to allow us any latitude. As our way to the central station at Sirkedji took us past the Maritza we resolved to see Theodore at all costs. I had limped superbly all the way, and, as the interpreter of the party, had let it be known early and often that we had had nothing to eat that day though it was past noon. At the door of the Maritza I declared I could go no further, and after a wordy argument with the most truculent of the guard we were permitted to enter.

As if by chance Theodore was again our solicitous servitor and unostentatiously imparted much information during fleeting moments at our table. He had been unable to find a hiding-place, he confessed, as he palmed our *pour boire* of half a lira, but he had seen one of the *Batoum's* engineers and was of opinion that they would shelter us for an adequate bribe.

As we were leaving we encountered Prince Avaloff, the Russian Colonel we knew at Afion, and while the guard danced with rage, we drank a bock of beer together in an adjacent beer garden.

Since Austro-German armies had overrun Southern Russia after the Bolshevik peace, the Turks had released all Georgians (on the promise that they would fight the British, other



Russians spitefully declared) in the fond hope that the newly-founded Georgian Republic would aid the Turkish cause. Such hopes were not well founded in the case of Avaloff, for he loathed the Turks, and shortly before leaving Afion had had further reason to do so, over an incident which occurred during the visit of a Danish Commission.

Musloun had taken care that day to lock all Britishers in their houses, but Avaloff was interviewed by two Danes who were accompanied by Musloun and a Turkish Kaimakam. After the interview, the Kaimakam returned, and in perfect Russian accused Avaloff of attempting to pass some written communication to the Danes. Avaloff was furiously indignant and immediately challenged the Turk to a duel. The Turk declined the honour. As an alternative the Russian invited him to search for the note, and if it were found he would commit suicide, but on the contrary if it were not found the Turk was to be equally accommodating.

Avaloff informed us that Paul and Yeats-Brown had separated, Paul having set out disguised as an Arab in an endeavour to reach the Bulgarian coast and thence make his way to Greece.

We were almost dragged from the beer garden and travelled in a crowded unlighted train to Psamatia.

The night was propitiously dark, and as the train stopped at intervals and many of the passengers were friendly-disposed Christians, we could have jumped out but feared to do so as dawn would have found us without a hiding-place.

## CHAPTER XIX

### FREEDOM

**A**T Psamatia we were housed with half-a-dozen other officers and some hundreds of British, Indian, Russian, Roumanian and Serbian soldiers in an Armenian theological school. Our quarters were the various teachers' rooms, but the soldiers were herded together in filthy schoolrooms and outhouses. Many of them had been there for months waiting transfer to working camps, or existing in hopes of exchange.

Occasional parcels relieved the condition for Britishers and Indians, but starvation stared from the hungry eyes of the ragged prisoners of other nationalities.

Like caged animals Russians and Roumanians loped backwards and forwards across the courtyard when they were allowed out of their dens twice daily to exercise. On parcel days the Britishers would distribute a few luxuries among their more unfortunate fellow-prisoners.

The fighting record of the Serbs and their stoical dignity made them great favourites with the British and most of what was distributed was given them, while the less fortunate Russians searched for cigarette ends or gleaned stray grains of rice from the cracks of the flagstones.

Hill arrived some hours after us and much to my satisfaction he was placed in a room with Bott and myself. This room boasted the luxury of iron bedsteads. The ancient straw mattresses, however, were veritable hotbeds of vermin and the straw and sacking were rotten. We could pick bugs off our bodies and faces after only a few minutes in bed, and their attentions and the attacks of mosquitoes kept us wide awake. Poor Hill's discomfiture was increased by falling through his bed on account of the rottenness of the boards beneath the mattress.

Hill wrote next morning that he intended to start a forty days' fast and would confine his diet to bread. He left it to me to let it be known. Hinting to the most loquacious that in my opinion he could not live for more than a few days, the news soon spread and Britishers as well as Turks came at all hours to see the man who refused food.

Col. Coventry, smarting under the indignity of being considered accessory to the escape of Paul and Yeats-Brown, harangued the Commandant so successfully on Hill's behalf that next day Hill was sent on a stretcher to the railway station and returned to Gumush Suyu. I had applied to act as his attendant so that I might take him to Haidar Pasha where he wanted to join Jones, but my application was refused. The following day he reappeared at Psamatia looking very weak after his journeyings, whereupon Lieut.-Col. F. E. Baines, I.M.S., who had been sent to Psamatia as the British member of the long-awaited-for exchange board, sent a strong protest in writing about Hill's condition and treatment. Whatever his honest professional opinion may have been, he stated that Hill was dying through neglected dysentery and melancholia and that he should be sent to England at once. The result was that Hill went to Haidar Pasha, from which hospital after a further two months' dissembling and discomfort, he was sent to Smyrna for exchange.

Colonel Baines' presence at Psamatia encouraged us to present ourselves before the exchange board, as a last hope before attempting to escape. Lieutenants Fulton and Stone had arrived at Psamatia after a very short stay in Haidar Pasha hospital with alleged eye and ear complaints. They were placed in our room after Hill's departure, and knowing from conversation at Afion that they intended to escape at the earliest moment, we made a pact to go together as soon as the exchange board had finished its work.

Only three at Psamatia had any real claim for consideration. These were Lieutenant Withers, 16th Devons; Lieutenant Ware, London Scottish—suffering respectively from severe arm and leg wounds—and Father Mullen, a white-haired Catholic padre, captured in Kut-el-Amarah, whose exchange was anticipated on account of his age.

Father Mullen was universally popular as a simple and kindly soul. To the Turks and the natives of Psamatia he was

known as Pappas Effendi and Christian children ran to him for a blessing whenever he appeared in the street. Col. Coventry claimed that the after-effects of an attack of typhus of a year ago placed him in the front rank of possible exchanges, and both he and Flight Lieutenant Foster, who professed to be suffering from an insidious form of tuberculosis, had influential friends working for them at the other end, and showed righteous indignation if any suggestion of malingering were imputed to them.

The *kiatib* at Psamatia shared the general ignorance of his countrymen regarding European Christian names and surnames. Imagining that we owned one name only, on the Turkish principle of say, Abdul, son of Selim of Kastamoni, I found after answering the necessary questions that I was recorded on the books and thereafter had to answer to the name of Char-les-Valter-Viyett-Melbourne. A similar blending of his own with his father's name occurred in Bott's case, and as Fulton's name coincided exactly with his father's, he was known as James-Fulton-James Fulton. Stone had omitted his Christian name when interrogated, but the Turks in an effort to find some change in the family tree had questioned him regarding his grandfather. As a result he came to be known as Stone-Stone-Stone.

When the name of Char-les-Valter Viyett-Melbourne was shouted, I remained seated at the foot of the stairs leading to the room where the board was assembled. The interpreter repeated the name and came downstairs enquiringly. I was pointed out as the owner of the name and my companions left the scene to hide their laughter. After the interpreter had made it clear for the third time that I was wanted, I stumped upstairs as clumsily as possible. Colonel Baines sportingly winked at all malingering attempts, but I could see that even he was surprised and amused with my new rôle, for I had decided to develop headaches, forgetfulness, failing sight and hearing, and all the attributes of a perfect humbug or a sufferer from head injuries.

My hair was cropped short so that two head scars received in Mesopotamia showed up plainly. A disinterested air, ignorance of French, and an unwillingness to answer questions completed the make-up. . . . And as eagerness to explain was the outstanding feature with most others, the decision in

my case was deferred pending a further examination next day. The ankle was the last shot in my locker, but even its apparent stiffness, in the face of the Turks' orders to move it (which the interpreter translated "He say play with your foot") was not sufficiently convincing and I was passed out. Only the two wounded officers and ten out of fifty soldiers were marked down for exchange. Pappas Effendi accepted it philosophically. We four who intended to flit said it was what we expected and laughingly swapped experiences of the board room. Colonel Coventry was furious and threatened all manner of punishments for the Turkish members of the board after the war, but in spite of all expostulations a few days later he was packed off to Broussa, still protesting.

Visits to Constantinople were forbidden since the last escape and though Col. Coventry had offered parole for himself and others, the Commandant would not accept it.

Prince Avaloff had promised to communicate any negotiations made by Theodore with the *Batoum's* engineers, but as he had evidently done nothing and was inclined to be talkative, we cast round for a more discreet intermediary.

Vladimer Vilkovsky was a Ukranian aviator of Polish extraction, captured in a seaplane when operating with the Russian Black Sea fleet near Trebizond. We had been close friends at Afion, and, as he spoke seven languages and had made a determined effort to escape from Sivas to the Caucasus in 1916, I had a profound respect for his ability and courage.

With other Russians he was quartered in a building *vis-à-vis* with our school at Psamatia, but on some pretext had induced the guards to allow him to visit us daily.

Having heard that a Ukranian ambassador from the newly-founded republic had arrived at Constantinople he was endeavouring on the strength of his linguistic abilities to obtain the post of secretary.

To this end he frequently contrived to interview the ambassador and on my behalf called on Theodore for news. Many colloquies and discussions in the privacy of our room, or as we paced the walled courtyard overlooking the harbour, resulted in the evolution of the following plan. We were to escape during the week commencing August 24th. We would make our way to a German beer garden, *Zur Neuen Welt*, in the Grande Rue de Galata. There, at a table immediately

beyond the piano, we should meet a Russian civilian who would take us to a hiding-place. We should know him because of a cigarette behind his left ear. When the *Batoum* was ready to sail we were to go aboard as stowaways and for substantial bribes as fares to Odessa, would be concealed by the ship's engineers.

Fulton and Stone had no definite plans of their own, but as the date of our intended flit coincided with the period during which "John Willie," the Bosnian, would be orderly officer at San Stefano, and as an aeroplane had stunted over our prison the day after our arrival at Psamatia, they expressed their willingness to attempt the aeroplane venture for want of a better. In no measured terms we told them what we thought of the feckless "John Willie," and the risks they ran. Nevertheless, these determined youngsters, both of whom had celebrated their twenty-first birthdays in captivity, decided to chance their luck.

Before getting in touch with Vilkovsky we had endeavoured to obtain information from Theodore, by asking for permission to see a dentist. The precedent had been established a week or two before our arrival at Psamatia, and as we could show ample evidence of the need for attention our request was reluctantly granted. Bott and I had thus visited Constantinople again in spite of orders to the contrary. But as we were forbidden to lunch at the Maritza we arranged that sufficient work to necessitate another visit should be found.

The exchange board having finished its work, and the time for our return to Afion Kara Hissar drawing near, we fixed on Saturday, August 24th, as the day of our departure. I held that escape by day during a train journey was more possible of achievement than any nocturnal attempt from our well-guarded quarters. The front windows of the school looked out upon a road where sentries (whose numbers had been increased since the last escape) stood in doorways and at intervals along the frontage of both our own and the Russian house, while the window used by Col. Newcombe, Paul and Yeats-Brown was now out of the question, owing to the greater vigilance in that quarter. A high wall flanked the sides of the school and its outbuildings, and on the seaward side the courtyard was fringed by a low parapet which on its outer face dropped

thirty feet to the ground, while further sentries guarded the cleared ground at its base.

After some discussion it was therefore decided that we should endeavour to be sent to Constantinople on August 24th, and failing any better opportunity we should bolt from our guards into the crowd at the railway station in the city itself.

When next visiting the dentist I found him engaged so I paid in advance and asked the attendant to minute my guard's instructions that I should be required to come again on the following Saturday morning. The attendant was impolite and disobliging, but to my surprise the soldier, a yokel who had seen little of the city, insisted that it should be done. As I was leaving I met Avaloff, who informed me that Paul had been recaptured, after almost reaching the Bulgarian border disguised as an Arab, but I told him nothing of our scheme. My sentry was in no hurry to return to duty, and a twenty-five piastre note persuaded him to allow me to visit the Roman Hippodrome, the world-famed mosque of St. Sophia—the one-time Christian Temple of Divine Wisdom, built in the fifth century by the Emperor Justinian.

It was with reverential awe that I donned the boat-like slippers at the door of this sacred edifice. The entire floor space was covered with small prayer mats, and the gorgeous interior, its enormous balanced cupola, the finest example of new-Greek or Byzantine art; the massive pillars of marble, granite and porphyry, trophies of ruined Pagan temples from Baalbec to Athens; the galleries and porticoes where the followers of the last of the Constantines sought sanctuary when the city fell to the invading Turks,—conjuring up the pageant of its glories and vicissitudes, left me marvelling at the brain that conceived it, and the ambition of the Emperor who in building it sought to eclipse Solomon.

Bott also succeeded in fixing an appointment with the dentist for the 24th, and Fulton and Stone by continued persistence gained permission to see an oculist on the same day.

We had had to accumulate money for our expected travels. I had commenced by cashing cheques at Afion on the better paid French officers, and at Gumush Suyu through a Jewish messenger of the Dutch Legation who visited the hospital with parcels. We surreptitiously cashed cheques written on scraps of paper for which the bearer received his pound of flesh in

the shape of a substantial commission. Incidentally this was an eloquent tribute to British prestige, as it is doubtful if the cheques of any other enemy nationals would have been cashed at any price.

A further windfall was a legacy of forty-eight Turkish pounds from Hill who knew of our plotting and kindly advised me to take a loan of the money, before the hospital attendants robbed him.

Knowing the ways of the Turkish gendarmes and that we would be robbed if retaken, we carefully hid our money. Purchasing a pair of shoddy striped braces which even a Turkish *posta* would not covet, I sewed a twenty-five lira note between the double webbing on either side—the black stripes concealing even my unskilled stitches—and hid a fifty lira note in the tightening strap of my trousers, stuffing paper padding on the buckle side to make it of even thickness. Bott boasted a pair of suspenders and therein secreted his wealth. From an old handkerchief I made two bags to contain all the provisions we could carry—meat lozenges, chocolates and a few biscuits.

Having to travel light, my baggage consisted of a miniature Russo-French dictionary, watch, pocket-book and a pipe, together with a map of Constantinople which I had torn from a guide-book in the school library.

At length our great day dawned, and taking Rutherford into our confidence and entrusting him with our belongings, we sat down to wait the hour of departure. Trifling every day occurrences impressed themselves indelibly on our minds. The cries of the idiot-boy water carrier sounded more pitiful to our strained senses as he toiled up the cobbled road tormented and stoned by the rabble. Discordant trumpetings from the fire station next door—the staff of which sauntered forth almost nightly to conflagrations with banners, fanfare of trumpets and pantomimic hand pumps—rang out more blaringly than ever as the hours dragged on. Fulton and Stone left first. In ample time to catch the same train, Bott applied. There was some demur in his case, but permission was ultimately granted, and just as his sentry was about to march him off I presented my paper, signed by the dentist's assistant. The Commandant and his one-eyed Lieutenant, Zikki Bey, were furious at the number of applications, but had we applied first, Fulton and Stone, with less legitimate reason, might have been forbidden.



Another sentry was called up and we left for the railway station together, with the evident ill-will of the Commandant, escorted by very wary-eyed guards.

We were dressed in civilian clothes, Bott in a light-grey Embassy suit that in most parts of Constantinople would be considered *comme il faut* and a felt hat he had bought during our outing from hospital. My appearance in an old brown suit and peaked cap, obtained in a clothes distribution at Afion, was much less genteel, and I had grown a moustache and was unshaven for some days. It was my intention if I succeeded in getting away to don an old felt hat, which I had concealed, and after a clean shave endeavour to pass as a Georgian who had been released. In furtherance of this, Vilkovsky had written the name Kakaoridse Berodse in my pocket-book as a useful name to be memorised and adopted, while Bott determined, on the strength of his knowledge of German and a photograph of himself signed *Fritz Richter, Oberleutnant in der Fliegertruppen*, to pose as a German officer in mufti.

At the station we met our fellow conspirators, but on the appearance of Zikki Bey escorting Colonel Baines, we separated to avoid any suspicion of collusion. "See you in quod tomorrow," said Fulton as the train drew in, and we purposely entered a crowded compartment while they stood on the car platform and Zikki and the Colonel took seats close by.

At the terminal station in Constantinople we intended to scatter in various directions, hoping that one of us would attract the attention of more than one of the guards, while the others made good their escape. But as there was only one exit from the station courtyard to the street we had considered the possibility of escape at Koum Kapu (Sand Gate), a suburb one stop from the city, and had agreed that each or any of us could take any possible opportunity. At Koum Kapu it appeared possible to disappear from the high platform towards the ruined walls alongside by jumping from the train as it left the station. But on our arrival there we saw the utter futility of an attempt, for we should have had to climb through the windows, and as gendarmes with unpleasant looking pistols sat at several windows and there were numerous troops on the train, we should have been shot in quick time.

Miraculously it seemed, soon after leaving Koum Kapu, the most astonishing piece of good fortune came to our aid and

threw dust in the eyes of guards and police. Rounding a turn on an embankment, the train had just attained its maximum speed when, with a violent jolt and crash that tumbled passengers from their seats, we collided with some stationary trucks. Instantly there was a panic and a mad rush to the doors, with officers, soldiers and civilians struggling to pass the narrow exit. Women and children screamed and cried but were unchivalrously left to shift for themselves.

Our guard scenting trouble from the outset stood within arm's length of us throughout the journey. Immediately after the crash they were about to seize us when I commenced to pacify a very terrified Turkish lady. Seeing in the accident an excellent opportunity of escape I called to Bott and the others, and hearing a "Right-oh, White! I'm with you" from Bott, I put my head round a partition, pulled on the hat, turned up my coat collar and made an attack upon the rear of the struggling humanity in the doorway. With elbows and feet I forced an ungentlemanly way through without once looking back, but having gained the car platform saw to my dismay that we were on a viaduct from which escape was impossible owing to the crowd that had already detained. Swinging on to the next car as I saw the *chaoush* appear behind me on the platform and a soldier run along the viaduct to cut me off, I ran through it, pushing and pulling people from my path and forcing a way to the farther end. Finding myself at the end of the viaduct I jumped down on the railway track. The *chaoush*, a big athletic fellow, was close behind me, and as I stood less chance of eluding him by running down the slope of the embankment, I sprang on to one of the abutments of the viaduct and jumped the remaining ten or twelve feet into the street below.

So great was the din and confusion that the shouts of my pursuer were unheard, self-preservation being the dominant thought, though quite half the crowd belonged to either the military or police. The *chaoush* lost a dozen yards by running down the embankment instead of risking the jump. Making the most of my start and pushing my way through the onlookers, I raced for the nearest street corner. A curious crowd was hurrying in the opposite direction. A Turk among them ran into the middle of the street to catch me. There was no room to dodge and I ran at him determined to punch him as

hard as possible. As I raised my fist he drew away and I dashed past. Half-hearted attempts were made to stop me by two or three others who realised the situation too late to be successful, the majority of them being too intent on reaching the scene of the accident. Turning into an almost deserted lane I sprinted at top speed in an endeavour to increase my lead. Not daring to risk his shooting me by running down long blocks, I took every turn whether to right or left, fervently hoping that I should not be trapped in a blind alley.

Fortunately for me I found myself in a labyrinth of narrow streets, but try as I would I could not shake off the *chaoush*, and at each turn as I looked back before negotiating a new street he would appear at the last corner. One turn brought us into a broad thoroughfare where twenty or thirty soldiers watched our hare and hounds from behind an iron fence. Fortunately for me quickness of perception is not a pronounced trait of the Turkish soldier, therefore none of them fired. After fully half-a-mile of sprinting and turning I found that the Turk was gaining on me. Two months of pretended lameness had unfitted me for a prolonged chase, and I had put my best effort into the first few hundred yards. My pursuer was doggedly determined to catch me, thoughts of prison and the bastinado spurring him on.

As we ran I recollected that I had left two liras with a prisoner at Psamatia to give the *posta* who would be punished for my escape (for he would be starved while in prison), and this thought, owing to the uncertainty of my fate at his hands, tickled my sense of humour. Slipping and stumbling on the uneven cobblestones and becoming more exhausted at every step, I realised that the chase could have but one result unless I found a hiding-place immediately, for in well-fitting slippers the *chaoush* ran tirelessly and easily. Seeing an open door immediately after turning the corner of an almost deserted street I decided to chance the consequences and dashed inside.

Two old women were washing clothes in the front room, but at a glance I saw that they were Greek. My sudden appearance and wild looks so frightened them that simultaneously they raised their hands as if to scream or faint.

Putting my finger on my lips, I hurried through the room, whispering "Shush, Ingaleesh Zobot" (Silence, I am an English officer), and had just got behind the door when I heard



IN TURKISH DISGUISE.



the Turk dash past. As I expected him soon to return to search the house I got into a small cupboard beneath the stairs which one of the women indicated without taking her eyes from her work. It was hot and stuffy inside, and an odorous dust-bin did not improve matters. Leaning against the wall to get my breath I watched the women through a crack in the door.

"If any child should have seen him come in we are lost," one said to the other in Turkish. I considered it unfair to wait and decided to leave as soon as I had recovered my breath, in anticipation of which I turned down the cuffs of my antiquated trousers. A man entered the street door and questioned the women. I could only see his boots, but made sure it was the *chaoush*, and decided to dash out again as soon as he passed my hiding-place. To my relief he proved to be a youth who lived on the premises; but a wretched small boy, who also put in an appearance, was more inquisitive and persisted in glueing his eye to the crack in the cupboard door. A young Greek woman then approached, drove the small boy away and asked me in French if she could help me. Apologising for entering her house so unceremoniously I explained the situation and asked for a drink of water, assuring her that I would leave the house as soon as I gained my breath since I did not wish to bring trouble on her or her household. She informed me that I could stay as long as I pleased, and, on pressing me further to know if she could help, I asked her if she could obtain a fez and Turkish coat, as I considered a disguise was necessary, realising that my description would be telegraphed to all the police, and that my late pursuer would still be lurking in the neighbourhood.

The head of the house arrived at this juncture and as he was also friendly, we went upstairs to ransack the wardrobe. He possessed three fezzes and was willing to part with one and a frowsy chesterfield coat for twelve Turkish pounds. The price was reasonable as a suit of clothes could not then be bought under fifty pounds, so clipping off my moustache and eyelashes to alter my facial expression, I put boot polish on the scars on my head, and very soon was a perfect picture of a nondescript Constantinopolitan. The thoroughly frowsy chesterfield belonged to the youth I had seen, and it was so ridiculously tight that I had to shed my coat and waistcoat to get it on. The fez was several sizes too

small, and when I wore it I felt as if I were balancing a small flower pot on my head. The Greek and his wife tried to persuade me to remain till dusk before venturing out, and filled with hatred and loathing of the Turk they almost wept when they learned that I had been two years a prisoner.

Remembering the rendezvous at the beer garden and being loth to allow them to run further risk on my behalf I insisted on leaving. "Perhaps some day we shall read of this in a book if you are successful," said the woman, when I thanked them. . . . And if this should reach the eye of those unknown samaritans who risked so much for a desperate fugitive, may they realise his sincere and everlasting gratitude.

Leaving a present for the old women and the small child, I asked if the youngster might be allowed to pilot me to the Galata tram; and after a preliminary reconnaissance of the street by the small boy I sauntered out, exulting in a consciousness of new-found freedom.

## CHAPTER XX

### A FUGITIVE FROM INJUSTICE

**T**HOUGHTS of freedom, though in an enemy capital, were intensely exhilarating. For more than two years I had been watched and guarded and spied upon by a haunting something of which I was as conscious as of my own shadow.

The relief seemed unbelievable and I felt strangely elated, though fully aware that I might be followed and pounced upon at any moment. At first the peculiarity of my garb made me feel that all eyes were upon me, and the insignificant fez threatened to topple off if I blinked.

Threading our way through a maze of narrow streets, I followed the boy to the tram track. Crossing an open space he encountered a dozen or more of his playmates who called to him to join them, but he was too conscious of his responsibilities to reply, looking neither to right nor left. We soon reached the tram line opposite the great mosque of Sultan Bayazid.

Believing that all trams in that street crossed the Golden Horn to Galata I eagerly stepped forward to board the first one going in that direction, when I caught sight of the boy from his seat on the kerbstone waving his arms and shaking his head. Some Turkish officers at the street corner were also attracted by the pantomime and immediately scanned the faces of all around them for a reason. My efforts to appear disinterested were successful, but when the next car approached I made the same *faux pas*, at which the youngster repeated the signals. This time I felt sure that I should be discovered. The officers searched eagerly round, to find me watching some spitted meat being grilled in a shop window and blandly returning the shopkeeper's gaze.

The right tram arriving after a half-hour's wait, by which



time the shopkeeper was worked up to a high pitch of expectancy, I allowed the officers to board the car first, then squeezed on to the rear platform among already overcrowded and complaining passengers, the boy wriggling between legs and feet to a squatting position near by.

Crossing the Galata bridge by tramcar saved me the certainty of being stopped by over-zealous gendarmes to pay toll—as all pedestrians were obliged to do—and there the plucky little fellow left me, melting into the crowd with a smile of goodwill.

Having memorised Vilkovsky's sketch of the location of the Bierhaus *Zur Neuen Welt* in the Grande Rue de Galata, I found it without difficulty.

Half-a-dozen German soldiers and two Austrian officers sat at tables near the piano, with a stray Greek or two in the background. Choosing a vacant table near the piano I seated myself with my back to the street and beckoned a waiter who was engaged in a noisy conversation with the Greek proprietress. "Biera!" I commanded, and he brought me a bock of beer and some strips of strong-smelling dried fish.

Sipping the beer I studied the crowd for a possible accomplice. None of them carried a cigarette behind the ear, so I placed one behind my own, from an old and worn tin the Greek had presented me with, and awaited results. Nobody was interested.

Ordering another beer—without fish—and feeling joyous enough in my new-found freedom to have many more, I decided to wait for something to turn up. A noisy altercation in a lane at the rear entertained me for some time. The voices of the Germans grew louder and more quarrelsome but still nobody arrived to adopt me. As an excuse for a longer stay I pretended to go to sleep, and, with eyes closed and ears wide awake for the entry of newcomers, spent two hours in feigned slumber.

Fearing a further stay might invite unwelcome attention I decided to call again next morning.

It occurred to me that the safest place till darkness set in was on the Bosphorous, where, instead of constantly running the risk of being drawn into conversation or being held up by police for evading military service, nobody but the boatman would be interested in me—also I might be able to find where the *Batoum* was berthed.

Constantinople has ever been a city of darkness and intrigue. In Roman and Byzantine days, vice, corruption and deceit kept pace with its triumphal progress and decay. Its glories have ever been marred by its infamies. With the advent of the barbaric Turk and the subjection of the enervated Christian races, conspiracies multiplied and plot and counter-plot became the order of the day.

Centuries of oppression and extortion resulted in the infamous rule of Enver and Talaat, with corruption and cruelty universally rife. A state of war had increased this depravity. Suspicion and deceit could be sensed everywhere, and each man became a spy on his neighbour.

More than once as I wended my way through the crowd of nondescript humanity that ebbed through the Rue de Galata, I suffered the interrogating and suspicious glances of passers by. Their looks I invariably returned with interest, adopting the principle of regarding them truculently for a moment before moving on without looking back; for had I appeared embarrassed or anxious it is certain I should have been followed.

A *chaoush* and two military policemen stood on a street corner, and while passing them as unobtrusively as possible the *chaoush* stretched out an arm and stopped me. Before he could speak, and noticing that he held an unlighted cigarette, I proffered him my lighted one, nonchalantly looking up and down the street as if concerned only in the continuance of my walk, until a light was secured. With a mumbled thanks and gravely salaaming by touching heart and brow, he returned the cigarette. Salaaming in return, I proceeded on my way—rejoicing . . .

Deeming further cigarettes a good investment after such an escape, and as I required a stock for my ear trick at the Beer Garden, I sought a shop in which to purchase more. A soldier with a rifle and bayonet drove me off the footpath as I hurried along, but I saw that his attentions were impartial, as other pedestrians received similar treatment.

Whether I most resembled a Turk, an Armenian or a Greek, I do not know, but as I wore a fez it would be assumed that I was a Turkish subject and therefore spoke Turkish. Not wishing to be betrayed by my accent I chose the moment to buy cigarettes when a tramcar and some German motor lorries were rattling past the selected stall. Pointing to the cigarettes

and moving my lips as in speech I bought and paid for what I wanted, but found myself at a disadvantage by being unable to expostulate when overcharged by the youthful profiteer.

At a landing stage below the Pera hill, I decided to hire a boat, so sat down close at hand to learn the procedure. Veiled women in twos and threes and occasional students came to the water-front and after much haggling over the price set off for short excursions along the Bosphorus or to the Asiatic shore. Selecting a *caiquechi* whom I thought I could manage if he became obstreperous, I enquired the price of his boat's hire for two hours. My counting ability in Turkish being limited, I did not understand his first demand and shook my head, feigning deafness until he lowered the price to something I understood, which he showed me in tens of piastres on his fingers. After pushing off, he commenced to grease the rowlocks and overhaul the boat with such care, talking volubly all the while, that I decided that if I had chosen the least pugnacious of the boatmen, he was certainly the laziest and most talkative.

Realising that deafness was the best cure for his loquacity, he found me looking away in the midst of his introductory peroration. "Are you deaf, Effendi?" he enquired. I begged his pardon with uncouth grunts, placing my hand behind my ear to encourage him to repeat the question. With many variations he repeated the question, standing up, gesticulating, and shouting first in one ear then in the other. Eventually I convinced him that I was deaf in both ears.

This depressing information kept him quiet for a good half-hour, during which time we rowed past the Sultan's beautiful palace of Dolma Batche, a white Corinthian structure like a huge fairy houseboat that rides on the water's edge in a conspicuous situation on the Bosphorus. The music of a European band floated out to us as we pulled past, indolent guards staring vacantly down upon us. The sun shone, other craft passed and re-passed. The city of Emperors and Sultans wore its finest raiment, and I felt at peace with it and all the world.

With the love of the native for his home town, the *caiquechi* renewed the harangue, insisting on describing the incomparable loveliness of every feature. When he had shouted their praises three or four times I would signify my approval with a discreet *tchok guzul* (very beautiful) or *pek iyi* (very good) or more often one of the equivalent signs that denote satisfaction.

Wearying at length I complained of sudden and simultaneous pains in the head and stomach and relapsed into a lifelike imitation of sea-sickness. This so far deceived my credulous Sancho Panza that he propped me up tenderly with the boat's cushions, hoisted a sail to steady the boat, and desisted from talking for some time.

We were too far up the Bosphorus to identify the ships, the majority of which were anchored near the mouth of the Golden Horn, but I made up my mind, should I fail to find the man of my quest in the Beer Garden next day, that I would set out in search of the *Batoum*.

After two hours' rowing, during which I was able to admire Constantinople from the most advantageous point of view, we returned to the landing stage, just as darkness was blotting out its incomparable silhouette of domes, minarets and mouldering buttresses.

So that the *caiquechi* might not set the police on my track in case my behaviour had aroused his suspicions, I made an appointment, which I fear I had no intention of keeping, to meet him at the steps at 10 a.m. the next morning to visit some beauty spots on the Asiatic side.

Directing my steps towards the European quarter of Pera, where I hoped to obtain a meal and a resting-place for the night, I passed a large cemetery, to which I intended to return, failing better sleeping accommodation. My way led me along the narrow street past Gumush Suyu hospital where I saw a group of guards and hospital orderlies whose faces I recognised. Almost rubbing shoulders with Ibrahim, I felt satisfied with my disguise; for truly clothes maketh man, a truism I first realised when at Haidar Pasha hospital as I wandered around from ward to ward in nightshirt and slippers in search of Jones.

On reaching the Grande Rue de Pera, a thick-set, low-browed civilian stopped me, jabbering harshly in an unknown tongue that was probably Armenian. Feigning deafness, I induced him to repeat his request three times, his volubility and temper suffering at each repetition. Failing to grasp a single word, I offered him a cigarette, which he disdainfully accepted and passed on. Judging by his expression on leaving me, I imagine his farewell was full of well chosen epithets.

The Grande Rue de Pera, the centre of the European

quarter, which contains the most fashionable shops, is Constantinople's finest street. Being Saturday night, the shops were brilliantly lighted. German and Austrian officers and soldiers in their best and brightest uniforms formed a considerable section of the cosmopolitan crowd, and strutted about, stiff and pretentious, or bombastic and quarrelsome.

After looking in at many a door and window, the squeaking of fiddles, tinkling of mandolines and unmelodious whining that passes for singing in the East, that issued from a third-rate eating-house, induced me to patronise this delectable establishment, realising that if its inmates were drunk they would be less discerning. Hypocritical smiles and applause, accompanied by approving wags of the head at their sottishness and songs, satisfied their dulled minds as to my bona fides, for flattery will turn the heads of rogues as well as honest men—and before I left, the motley revellers were singing for my amusement. During the interval of reading *Le Soir* and devouring salt fish and olives, I unsuccessfully endeavoured to ascertain from the waiter if he knew of a lodging house where I could spend the night.

Believing that Nicholas P. was still at the Hotel Impériale, I enquired its location.

Though we had visited it on our walk from hospital, try as I would I could not find it. . . . Deciding finally to sleep in the cemetery, I resolved to see a "show" before retiring.

Seeing an illuminated sign, which I imagined was a cinema advertisement, I looked round for a ticket box but failed to find one. Mounting the stairs to the first floor I pushed open a door and found I had entered a combined boot-shine parlour and barber's shop by mistake. Beneficial as either operation would have been for my appearance I deemed it unwise to remain, and after glancing along the line of unshaven faces, while cogitatingly stroking my own, I hurried downstairs to the street.

My next venture was at a newsagent's, where I extravagantly bought another *Soir* as a pretext to enquire the location of a theatre. "Surely you know that there is one next door," said the shopkeeper, who spoke fluent French. "Of course! of course! how could I have forgotten," I replied. But knowing the curiosity of the Levantine, instead of going straight to the ticket office of the theatre I crossed the road to watch if anyone

were following me. Walking away for some distance I crossed over and returned.

The corpulent inhabitant of the ticket office was pompous enough to be both cashier and owner and questioned and counselled me when I asked for a twenty piastre ticket. Was I a Turk? "Oh, yes." At which he harangued me so rapidly that I could scarcely follow a word, but interspersed his remarks with a comprehending *evvet* or *tchok eyi* whenever he paused.

Within the Theatre Opéon a cathedral-like silence reigned, and after choosing an excellent seat and accustoming myself to the gloom, I realised that I was the only person in the audience! . . . Ten minutes later a boy selling programmes told me the show did not commence till 9.30 p.m. This meant a wait of an hour and a half, so deciding it would be safer in the street I bustled out again, almost falling through a glass door in my hurry.

Leaving the Grande Rue, I wandered about the bazaars and maze of narrow streets that fringe the finest part of Pera. Loitering before stalls of fruit and melons, inspecting trays of fly-haunted figs and raisins, and watching the life and misery of a subterranean world in mean streets and dark alleys, I occupied the time until I emerged once more into the glare and bustle of the Grande Rue. There two men speaking English passed me, and for a mile I followed them to try and judge if they were possible friends or foes, but I ultimately lost them in the crowd before deciding.

At an obvious cinema hall where a motley queue of Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Austrians and Germans sought admission, I bought a twenty piastre ticket. Most of the seats were occupied so I had to be content with one to which the usher escorted me, next a *chaoush* whose companions were two Turkish soldiers, while some cadets from the Military Academy occupied the remaining seats of the row.

Soldiers formed the bulk of the audience, Germans and Austrians being the most conspicuous, and I chuckled inwardly at the thought of participating in their entertainment. A film production of Anthony Hope's "Sophy of Kravonia" was the *pièce de résistance*, which, with some German war pictures, I thoroughly enjoyed after three years of Turkey.

During the intervals I studiously read *Le Soir* to avoid unwelcome attention, and with the double attraction of watch-

ing the excitement of the *chaoush* and his companions and the endeavours of an Austrian soldier to earn the smiles of some Greek ladies nearby, the time quickly passed.

Once more in the street, I set out for the cemetery. Searching for it in vain, I decided to try once more to find the Hotel Impériale. Some of the shops were closing and seeing a shop girl on her way from work I questioned her as to its whereabouts. Unfortunately my appearance was against me, for no sooner had I spoken to her than she took to her heels and ran as if for dear life. Hastening in the opposite direction, as the street seemed to bristle with gendarmes, I negotiated some dark by-ways before returning to the Grande Rue. This time I interrogated somebody less likely to take fright, in the person of a street vendor of walking sticks.

He was as determined to sell me a stick as I was to locate the hotel, assuring me, as he handed me a collection of sticks as numerous as a golf champion's, that each of them suited my particular style of beauty. Every hotel but the Impériale seemed known to him, but as a *vecika* as to my identity would have been required in any other than the Impériale, my inquiry was fruitless—and I left him after his hopes had risen almost to the verge of tears.

Overhearing a remark in Russian from a group of soldiers on a street corner, I halted, ostensibly to light a cigarette, while listening to their conversation. Believing them to be Georgians released from captivity, I struck up a conversation, in the fond hope of ascertaining the whereabouts of a suitable lodging. To my surprise, I discovered that they were Bulgarian officers, and, thankful that I had said nothing incriminating, I withdrew from the group as soon as possible. My mistake was forgivable as many colloquialisms are similar in the Russian and Bulgarian languages and the uniforms of the officers strikingly alike.

Gradually the streets became deserted, soon leaving only the gendarmes tramping heavily on their beats. The elusive cemetery and the Hotel Impériale seemed as far off as Piccadilly. I contemplated sleep in some dark doorway of an obscure street, but as only rogues and the police were afoot after midnight there seemed every likelihood of being arrested for vagrancy.

Wandering along one of the numerous side streets of the Grande Rue a light in an open doorway prompted me to try

my luck for a lodging. A woman demanded my business and in my best Turkish I informed her that I was a Georgian, Kakaoridse Berodse by name, who had lost his *vecika* (passport), and sought a place to lay his head. To my astonishment she replied in German, of which language I rightfully professed ignorance.

"You look like a German spy, or deserter," she said suspiciously. . . . I explained that a Russian *kalpak* was a conspicuous headpiece and usually attracted a crowd when I appeared in the street. It was to obviate this, and also because I was a good Musselman, that I wore a fez. She attempted to continue the conversation in Russian. "Now you speak my native tongue I understand you better," I said. "Can you let me have a room," and I proceeded to air my Russian.

This had the desired effect. "Unfortunately I know very little Russian," she explained, lapsing into Turkish and showing me upstairs. "I speak Yiddish and Turkish and German, for I am a Jewess, but I learned a little Russian when my husband, who is now fighting with the Turks, was in Odessa."

Passing upstairs I saw two gendarmes seated in a room where *rakki* was flowing freely, while music, shouts and discordant laughter issued from behind closed doors in other directions. Wondering what kind of house I had stumbled into, the presence of the gendarmes almost decided me to leave. But hesitation would have been my downfall, so paying the woman in advance with a little more for backsheesh I locked the door and slept soundly till morning. Not all the plagues invoked by Moses to annoy Pharoah could have kept me sleepless that night, having covered many miles by train, tram, boat and on foot, besides cramming into the day more incident than during a year in Afion.

Leaving as unobtrusively as possible while a drunken silence pervaded the house, I made my way to the terminal of the Tunnel, an underground funicular railway that connects Pera with Galata. Most disconcerting of all situations was the ride in this comical train, for I sat immediately opposite an intelligent and suspicious young Turk who stared hard and long throughout the ride, and more than once seemed on the point of addressing me.

*Zur Neuen Welt* had not opened its doors when I arrived, so I strolled as far as Galata Bridge in search of a place to



breakfast. Purchasing a paper, I entered a refreshment kiosk near the bridge, choosing a seat opposite a large mirror, where I could study the crowd as it ebbed and flowed across the bridge without my face being seen by people outside.

A paragraph under the heading of *Faits Divers*\* described the accident that had been so opportune for me on the previous day. Fortunately both journals omitted mention of my escape. Amused and at ease for a few moments, I was enjoying some cakes and coffee, when a peevish well-dressed Turk took a seat close to me.

Nothing in the place pleased him. The quality of the so-called coffee—made from burnt maize and smelling like boiled clothes,— the scarcity of sugar, the evils of profiteering, the looks of the proprietor, in fact everything that came within his vision, except myself, received the full share of his criticism. Despite my efforts to appear engrossed in my paper, he turned repeatedly to me for corroboration. He appeared more pugnacious than the proprietor, so I sided with him, and though understanding only a quarter of his remarks I so grew in his esteem by obsequious applause that I feared that he was about to move to my table. Requiring no confidential friends at this moment, I gulped down my food and departed.

Outside I almost ran into the arms of a Naval *chaoush* who had belonged to our guard in Afion, but I might have been an inmate of the Sultan's harem, so unknown was I to him.

The dusty contents of fly-specked shop windows and the flamboyant advertisement of a peep show, where strong men and other monstrosities were exhibited, occupied me till the beer garden opened and some customers entered.

Seeking out my seat of the previous day, I read the paper, sipped the beer, ignored the fish, and by every possible and impossible expedient endeavoured to make time fly. Sundry German and Austrian soldiers, besides a few nondescript civilians, dropped in to drink and pass the time of day, but none of them evinced the slightest interest in me or the cigarette that at intervals I placed behind my ear.

After nearly two hours, I began to tire of waiting for the elusive stranger, and had almost given up hope when an elderly

\* Ottoman Lloyd. August 25th, 1918. Accident de chemin de fer.—Un accident qui aurait pu avoir de graves conséquences s'est produit hier à Koum Kapou. Le train partant de cette gare a rencontré sur la voie deux wagons vides qui ont été endommagés. On attribue cet accident à l'attention de l'aiguilleur.

bearded European wearing a battered panama hat entered, and passing close to me with bent head and an abstracted air, took a seat at a vacant table.

Here was the man for whom I had waited so long! For, almost hidden by his hair and the turned-down rim of his hat, I saw a ragged cigarette.

As soon as I could catch his eye I placed a cigarette behind my ear, but he ignored the signal, and did not look in my direction for some time. As subtly as possible I repeated the signal, but again without result, except I noticed that his hand shook either with fear or excitement. So manifest did his agitation become that I was afraid that he would leave the place, so strolling across to his table I ordered two drinks and sat down beside him before he could protest. Maintaining an air of unconcern, in order to deceive curious onlookers, I asked him in Russian if he spoke that language. He curtly replied in the affirmative. "You are waiting for somebody?" I suggested, at the same time placing the cigarette I was smoking in the assigned position. He seemed horribly frightened, his hands rapping nervously on the table's edge. "I am one of the British officers you seek," I assured him, suddenly realising that my disguise was responsible for his perturbation. "But there were to be two," he muttered. "The other was caught, or you would already have met him," I replied. Urging him to abandon any semblance of secrecy in case we were watched, I told him that if his hiding-place were ready I would bid him good-bye forthwith—for the benefit of all observers—but would wait outside till he came out, when I would follow him. He agreed, so we shook hands with many farewells as if our ways lay in different directions.

Outside, I manœuvred around shop windows until my new-found friend appeared, whereupon with no sign of recognition I followed him about twenty yards in rear.

Through narrow, steep and tortuous streets that reeked with filth and misery, we played our game of follow-my-leader, taking numerous twists and turns where the battered panama served as an admirable beacon. Leaving the sordid streets we emerged into a wider thoroughfare in which we were the only pedestrians. A fat shopkeeper standing in the doorway of a joiner's shop, regarded the old man knowingly, turned his

beady eyes upon me, and glanced suspiciously from one to another as if scenting a plot.

To allay his suspicions I ignored my guide for the time being to examine a newly-varnished table that stood in the doorway of the shop. Placing my hand upon its polished top, the shop-keeper's mind was recalled to the selling of his wares. Turning the table over I examined the morticing, wagged my head approvingly, and enquired the price. After considering the matter, I declared the work *tchok eyi* and passed on.

My confederate had meanwhile disappeared, but I found him in the next side street, and after more meandering he halted outside a dilapidated house with an iron door, which he unlocked with an enormous key, and shortly afterwards I followed him inside.

After carefully locking the door, the stranger whispered that he was the proprietor of the hovel, which bore traces of having once been a carpenter's workshop. Informing me that I should have to wait two or three days before going aboard the *Batoum*, he left, carefully locking the door behind him, telling me that he would return in the evening with food.

Iron-shuttered windows and the closed door made the room almost as black as night, but light filtering through chinks in the shutters and in one place where a brick was missing, allowed me to find my way about.

I remained perfectly still for an hour or two, getting accustomed to the darkness, and listening intently in case we had been seen or overheard. Nothing but the scratchings of rats in the shavings disturbed the silence. Removing my boots, I explored the room, which measured about ten feet by fifteen feet, and found its inner walls consisted merely of a thin partition with gaps between the planks, through which we could easily have been seen should the other side of the partition be inhabited. A carpenter's bench, tools, short planks and a litter of shavings and dirt which culminated in a festering heap in a corner where rubbish was shot from above, completed the furnishings.

Late in the day someone opened a gate near by, and tramped through the room on the other side of the partition. Stamping upstairs he went to bed directly above me, as I heard the unmistakable sound of heavy boots being thrown down. A second person followed, and after a shouted dialogue in Turkish

concerning food, the smell of cooking reminded me of the Russian's promise to return.

When I knew by the time that it must be dark outside, a key grated in the lock and the Russian entered with a bag containing a bottle of water, bread, white cheese and a melon. "Who is the person upstairs?" I whispered. "A Turkish officer. You will have to keep very quiet when he is indoors," was the disconcerting reply. "And the other?" . . . "His orderly," he breathed. I led him to the partition and showed him where the light from the orderly's lamp shone through the chinks. He arranged some planks to cover the worst gaps, and after clamping a plane to the end of the bench for my pillow, departed.

The bench was my bed and was acceptable enough until a British air-raid caused me to lose some hours' sleep while guns close by barked and growled and my neighbours made a noisy exit into the street.

"Lenin," as I had nicknamed the Russian, for want of a better or a worse name, brought food next morning in a tool bag on his way to work. My report that both the Turks had left the house encouraged him to lift his voice from its usual hoarse whisper, and he informed me that they spent most of the day elsewhere. I was also elated to learn that "Lenin" had met one of the *Batoum's* engineers who told him of the arrival of a British officer aboard his ship. As the date of sailing was uncertain, the British officer (whom I judged to be Bott) had arranged to come ashore to share my hiding-place.

Strangely enough, though I had heard the Turks depart, the rattling of dishes on the other side of the partition kept me on the *qui vive* throughout the morning. Somebody appeared to be washing and scraping tin plates. In endearing tones, the orderly had been addressing the unknown somebody while the officer was upstairs. But though I spent hours stretched on the floor with my eye to a crack in the boards, I could see no human thing.

It was an uncanny feeling to imagine myself spied upon, and I was uncertain whether the light-footed being was a cunning watcher or a voiceless drudge, for there was no response to the orderly's blandishments.

The noises having ceased, I decided to smoke, in preparation for which I wrapped the chesterfield about my head to hide

the light, and made a rustling in the shavings with my feet in imitation of the scampering of rats, to drown the familiar sound of a match being struck.

In the feeble light near the missing brick I spent an afternoon of eyestrain over the miniature dictionary until the rattling of the key sent me to a hiding-place and "Lenin" entered followed by a figure whom I recognised as Capt. Bott in spite of the peaked cap and reefer coat of a Russian sailor.

He had been caught before getting clear of the railway on the day of my escape, and was held by two soldiers till the return of the *chaoush* who had chased me. The Turk shouted and cursed, threw his hat on the ground, shook his fist at Bott, and after consultation with his companions took him to Koum Kapou police station. On the way, while the guard peered forlornly into doorways and cellar gratings in search of me, he managed to rid himself of incriminating food supplies and bribed them into forgetting that he had ever attempted to escape. At the police station, where Bott was searched, the guard telephoned the news to Psamatia and on their return they found the Commandant frantic with rage.

Each told a concocted and corroborative story regarding the accident, how all had been knocked down by the shock of the collision, and that I had been missed in the confusion. Bott further assisted by explaining that I was rather queer in the head and that becoming more unbalanced by the accident, had wandered away not knowing where I was going. The Commandant actually embodied this story in a report, in which he pretended to hope that on recovering my senses I would return of my own free will.

The unbelieving Ministry of War, however, ordered all British prisoners to be returned to Anatolia next day. Accordingly all British prisoners, except those marked down for exchange, marched to Constantinople (owing to dislocation in the train service caused by the collision), en route for Afion Kara Hissar.

On Galata Bridge, while waiting for the ferry steamer to take them to the Asiatic side, they had been permitted to buy drinks at a little café, and just as the steamer approached her moorings two of them asked to be allowed to return to the café for some kit they had left behind. These two were being marched back in the custody of a *chaoush* when Bott seized

the opportunity of a possible escape and asked if he might go too. The Turkish officer in command told him to follow the party, which he did, but a few paces behind the *chaoush*, so that he was not seen. When the other three passed to an inner room he asked a Greek waitress to show him a hiding-place, which she did almost without expressing surprise. The ferry steamer hooted, the *chaoush* hustled his two charges outside, and almost immediately afterwards Bott emerged from his sanctuary and walked in the opposite direction, soon being lost in the crowd. Hiring a caique at the waterfront, he set out in search of the *Batoum* and found it after much searching, finally asking its whereabouts at the gangway of a German steamer.

On the *Batoum* he met the engineers who were to be bribed to hide us on board as stowaways. They told him of my arrival at the hiding-place, and, as the vessel was not due to sail for a week and his presence was considered unsafe, they advised him to join me. Accordingly, in old clothes borrowed from the third mate and carrying his civilian suit in a newspaper parcel, he came ashore with the chief engineer to meet "Lenin" at *Zur Neuen Welt*.

I was conscious of the enormity of the task of crossing Russia alone, so that the almost miraculous arrival of Captain Bott was a most satisfying stimulus and resulted in an increase of confidence for us both.

We passed the intervening week with what patience we could muster. The atmosphere was damp and musty; we were unable to wash and had to suffer all the discomforts of close confinement in a single room. Whether they sang, whistled, talked or snored, we heard the Turkish officer and his orderly, and had ourselves to maintain a deathlike stillness and tiptoe on bootless feet so that they would not hear us.

One night I woke to hear Bott talking in his sleep, after which we slept in watches. Occasionally passers-by tried the door handle or beat upon the iron face of the door, and we spent many anxious moments peering through the key hole or waiting with billets of wood for whoever might possess a duplicate key. Sometimes we lay for hours behind shavings and timber in endeavours to see the silent third person who rattled dishes behind the partition. To our relief and amusement we ultimately learned from "Lenin" that the innocent

cause of our perturbation was no more than a tame rabbit that was petted and fondled by the orderly.

Children threw stones at the door, which unnecessarily alarmed us; further air-raids were an interesting diversion; the cries of the various street vendors became known to us, and a small boy with a flute-like voice sat for hours outside our door singing some haunting Eastern melody. "Lenin" partially opened the window shutter one day, covering it with boards at the base so that when we sat beneath it there was sufficient light to read. Daily we spent tedious hours copying and memorising new Russian words and phrases, seated on bags of shavings immediately beneath the window.

One morning we were startled to hear someone scrambling upon the window outside, and looking up I saw a fez appear above the sash! There was no time to hide beneath the window, so warning Bott to make a pretence of working, I commenced to measure a plank. The fez surmounted an evil-looking Turkish face, that stared at us while Bott feverishly bored useless gimlet holes in the bench. Pretence was difficult under such a searching gaze, and when the face disappeared we expected a clamorous demand for admittance. Strangely enough, although hourly we expected the arrival of the police, no one came, and we wondered if the difficulty of entering the place had given us respite or whether the sight of the two unkempt, unshaven men who appeared to be working had satisfied the curiosity of the stranger. "Lenin" showed fright when we told him, but said that it was probably one of his late customers.

Considering that we would be safer on shipboard, I told him that we intended to leave next day. He said he would consult the engineers and left. Before he returned, the face had twice reappeared, the scratching on the wall being the first indication that its owner was climbing upon the sill, then the head slowly appearing above the shutters and staring down upon us with a sinister gaze.

"Lenin" almost fainted when I told him and was sure the Turk was a police spy. He had arranged a rendezvous with the *Batoum's* chief engineer. After a preliminary reconnaissance at our request, and receiving his dues, a procession of three passed out into the light of day.

The Russian led the way, followed at about twenty yards

by Bott as a Russian sailor, while I mouched along the opposite side of the street, aping a Galata Italian, in the frowsy chesterfield and Bott's felt hat, with the further disguise of accumulated whiskers.

"Lenin" was nervous and excited, more than once leading us into blind alleys in an endeavour to reach the water-front by unfrequented streets. We were prepared to dart off in different directions if detected and to meet afterwards at the beer garden. In the Grande Rue de Galata, two gendarmes walking ahead of me unwittingly scared me, for they seemed always in my path and by a strange coincidence crossed the street whenever I did so. On a street corner "Lenin" met a Russian ship's officer in the white duck and peaked cap of the Mercantile Marine, and the follow-my-leader was continued to the quay.

Two huge gendarmes were posted at the landing stage but fortunately were too preoccupied in a private conversation to notice us. Bott approached the Russian, who hailed a *caïque*, and indicating a steamer in the distance directed the *caïquechi* to row to it. As they were casting off I hailed Bott as a new-found friend and jumping in, we pulled out into the stream.

Climbing the gangway of an uninviting and battered tramp, we were greeted by as piratical a set of desperadoes as ever sailed beneath the "Jolly Roger". After explaining that we wished to see the third mate we discovered just in time that we were being taken before the Captain, so disappeared down a convenient companionway in search of our accomplice.



## CHAPTER XXI

### STOWAWAYS

**T**HE s.s. *Batoum* was an English-built freighter which in the thirty years of her chequered existence had enjoyed a strenuous career. Her iron decks were pitted with rust holes, the unpainted sides blotched and mottled with the neglect of years, and everything but the engines, which were surprisingly efficient, was suggestive of the derelict rather than of a sea-going ship. . . .

After years of peaceful trading in the Black Sea, the *Batoum* had served as a Russian transport to the Turkish front, and since the revolution had accumulated rust and barnacles during months of idleness in Odessa. Probably her most adventurous voyage was made between Novorissisk and Odessa when she was commandeered by a band of Bolsheviks, who brought the loot and liquor of the town aboard, ordering the Captain to convoy them wheresoever they willed.

Peering into every doorway below, we eventually found a cabin which Bott recognised as the third mate's. It was a tiny compartment scarcely bigger than a telephone box, yet it contained a bunk with a locker beneath, and a low seat surmounting a drawer; besides a ship's washstand. The third mate, Kuhlmann, a stockily-built young Lett, was fast asleep in the bunk, but rose and welcomed us warmly. When open, the door almost filled the room, but if closed it was oppressively hot and stuffy, the one small port-hole being of little use in dissipating the heat that radiated from the ship's iron sides. "In case you are followed, I shall go on deck," said Kuhlmann, "and should any boat come alongside I shall rap three times on the deck immediately overhead, upon which one of you must hide in the locker and the other in the drawer beneath the seat." We stared in amazement. "It is not so difficult as you suppose," he laughed as he left us. We locked the door, fervently hoping that we should not need to try.

Greatly relieved at having reached the ship in safety, and still blinking in the light of day after a week in semi-darkness, we were congratulating ourselves on our good fortune when three unmistakable raps on iron rang out. "The drawer will do me," said Bott, who was the shorter, pulling it open as he spoke. It contained some filthy sheets, in which he wrapped himself, and, doubling up his legs until he could squeeze himself in, I closed the drawer. The door of the locker had been nailed up, but on lifting the mattress of the bunk I removed some slats of wood and climbed in from above. Reaching over and unlocking the door, I sank into the locker like a snail into its shell—fitting just as tightly—with my head between my knees, and pulled the mattress and bits of wood into place above me. The locker was two feet six inches in height, two feet wide and two feet deep, with a shelf that did not add to my comfort, not to mention a quantity of fetid rags and an empty iodoform bottle. With much squirming and wriggling I pulled some clothes over my head in case the mattress was removed from the bunk. The heat and stench were almost unbearable, for sailors on Russian freighters do not change their own nor their bed linen too frequently nor without good cause.

In a trice we had disappeared into our hiding-places, and for an hour and a half that seemed an eternity, in the reeking atmosphere, we listened expectantly for the turn of the door handle, cursing all Turks and Russians meanwhile. At length conditions became so unbearable that after a muffled dialogue we emerged perspiring and protesting. We were still discussing the false alarm when the signal rapped out again. Again we scuttled away like rats, this time forgetting to unlock the door, which necessitated my reappearing like a jack-in-a-box to do so. A shorter stay sufficed on this occasion, but again the visitors failed to make an appearance. Two more alarms followed, but at the fourth signal we were exasperated into defiance, deciding to chance the consequences. Long watching at the porthole led to a solution, for I discovered that the supposed signals were caused by the gangway striking against the ship's side with the wash from passing ferry steamers.

After the tame rabbit prank, we should have been prepared for Fate's practical joking.

When darkness fell, the ship's officer we had seen at the waterfront took us to his cabin, where we drank glasses of

sweet tea and smoked his excellent cigarettes. Ivan Michaelovitch Titoff, Chief Engineer of s.s. *Batoum*, and head of the syndicate that was to smuggle us to Russia, was a round-shouldered man of middle height, whose shifty piggish eyes betrayed an otherwise simple expression which was accentuated by a turned up nose.

Some days before our escape I had prepared a parcel which I gave to Vilkovsky to send to the *Batoum*. It was with pleasure therefore that we learned from Titoff that he had received it, but judge of our surprise when, instead of being given biscuits, butter, tobacco and other luxuries, he handed me a packet containing a few ounces of rice, two small pieces of chocolate and four dried apricots. I asked what had become of the remainder, but he solemnly declared, while his shifty eyes moved from the one to the other of us, that he had handed us all he had received. He enquired if we had brought our money, moving his thumb and forefinger significantly as if dealing cards. We informed him that we had sufficient for our wants, at which he did not hesitate to say we were to pay him four pounds per day for our food, until the ship sailed, and he would be obliged if we would give him some of the money we had promised for our passage. His anxiety about the money was disquieting, and I informed him that we would pay him some of our passage money when the ship sailed and the remainder when we reached Odessa. He pretended to be satisfied with the arrangement and made an attempt at affability by reading some English phrases from a guide book.

We thought it diplomatic to profess enjoyment of his mutilation of our native tongue, and when he left us to bring the first mate, a spotless gallant with twirled moustachios who sang and played the balalaika, I looked in his cupboard and saw a small tin of English biscuits, unobtainable in Turkey except from British prisoners' parcels, which we felt sure had belonged to me. We decided to say nothing for the present and to have our reckoning later, but the discovery confirmed our suspicions as to his character.

We soon realised that in this den of thieves Titoff was the chief. Officers and crew were alike imbued with the desire to get rich quick by any illicit means, and every member of the ship's company, except perhaps the octogenarian captain, had an interest in stowaways or contraband. Knowing the un-

certainty of Russian affairs generally and the instability of the newly-founded Ukranian Republic, they determined to make hay with anything marketable. Sugar, drugs, leather and all manner of human cargo that could pay its way were smuggled aboard at all hours of the day and night. Mysterious whistlings from boats that glided alongside under cover of darkness gave us an inkling of the multifarious plottings of the crew. The firemen specialised in vodka and sugar stolen from another ship in the harbour, while the engineers hoped to make their fortunes with a corner in cocaine. Titoff had an interest in every scheme, and was feared and respected for his cunning. In our venture, he was associated with the second and third engineers and the third mate, and had allocated the lion's share of our passage money to himself. His grasping attitude was resented by the others, who in the main were honest rogues, and though ardent smugglers proved loyal to friends, and would not do an injury to those under their protection.

Andreas Kuhlmann, the third mate, showed us many kindnesses and added to our comfort by purchasing, at our request, two German automatic pistols, which gave us considerable moral support. He did this for the loan of five pounds with which to buy Russian leather (made in Turkey), assuring us so convincingly that it could be sold in Odessa at an enormous profit, that we increased the sum to fifteen and became smugglers ourselves.

Feodor Mozny and Josef Korotky, the second and third engineers, were also friends in need. As Titoff's subordinates, they feared and mistrusted him, and Josef, whose moral courage grew in proportion to the vodka he consumed, warned us in a confidential moment that Titoff was grossly overcharging us for our food, which he obtained from the ship's supply for nothing. To Josef we were also indebted for a scheme that would take us by boat, rail and foot for a thousand miles east from Odessa to join the Allied troops in Siberia, accompanied by him, an undertaking that we would have embarked upon but for finding friends in Odessa.

Feodor did us many kindnesses—particularly during the last week of our stay, when as the most dangerous part of the ship's cargo, we were hidden in the ballast tanks. Yet both he and Josef had contraband, in the shape of cocaine, tobacco and iodine, hidden in every nook and corner, bought with money

lent by the merchant who chartered the ship. In spite of their unenviable position among a crew that was mainly Bolshevik, they showed an unswerving spirit of goodwill, and when our arrangements for financial aid seemed likely to fail, Josef, Feodor and Kuhlmann offered to assist us to Russia without a kopek in payment, though Titoff and the second mate demanded that we should leave the ship.

The sailing of the *Batoum* was repeatedly postponed. On first coming aboard we were told that she would sail in four days' time. The four days were lengthened to ten; the cargo that had already dwindled through the depredations of the crew was unloaded, and the ship chartered by a Turkish merchant. Long delays followed while the Turk haggled with the authorities and bribed the officials for permission to export. Meantime we despaired of ever leaving port.

Continued postponement reduced our finances, and in an effort to secure sufficient for our passage and support for some time in Russia, we wrote cheques, which the avaricious Titoff promised to take to Mr S——, an interned English civilian, to be cashed. The faithful Theodore of the Maritza Café was to be the intermediary.

In the presence of witnesses we handed the cheques to Titoff and waited. During two days of waiting in the stuffy confines of Kuhlmann's cabin, we were visited only by Pyott, the morose old pantryman, and Katrina, the slatternly barefooted kitchen-maid, who surreptitiously pushed *bouché*, a soup of sour cabbage and macaroni, inside our door at midday, and rice and meat at night. Two days of cogitation upon the fate of the cheques led us to the belief that Titoff had swindled us. With the aid of the miniature dictionary, I sent him an impolite note demanding an explanation. In the presence of Kuhlmann he swore by all the gods that he had handed the cheques to Theodore, that he had gone to the Taxime Gardens as arranged to receive the money, but that Theodore had failed to appear. On inquiry at the Maritza he had ascertained that the waiter had been arrested.

Having little reason to trust the veracity of the man, and imagining that he was retaining the money in the hope that we would not dare to communicate with the Maritza, I asked him what kind of fools he took us to be. He showed righteous indignation at the insinuation, and jabbered and gesticulated

to such purpose that Kuhlmann was visibly impressed. "I am going to the Maritza to see for myself," I said, after consulting Bott, "and shall take the first boat going shorewards." He tried to dissuade me, but seeing that I was adamant, and having some respect for the pistols which we kept well in evidence, he ordered Kuhlmann to accompany me. As they went on deck, Josef arrived from the shore and threw into the cabin a copy of the *Hilal*. While scanning its pages, a paragraph\* attracted my attention that seemed to give some credence to Titoff's story. Three British officers had been arrested while in hiding at Theodore's house, together with Theodore, his mother and his sisters. We felt sure the officers were Yeats-Brown, Fulton and Stone, for we had heard that two officers had escaped from the train shortly after leaving Constantinople for Afion, and surmised that they had got in touch with Y.-B. through Theodore.

To fail to go to the Maritza in view of the newspaper report would have been a confession of faith in Titoff. There were three possibilities: Theodore had vanished with the money after cashing the cheques; Titoff had stolen the money, or he and Theodore had divided it between them. The news of Theodore's arrest made our position still more precarious, as floggings and starvation in the Ministry of War might extract a deal of information from him before he was hanged, and if he were in possession of our cheques or the accompanying note, the consequences would be serious for Mr S——.

A student named Viktor was the only member of the crew who could read French, and as he would not have seen the paper yet, I determined to investigate at the Maritza before the news of Theodore's arrest became generally known.

Titoff and Kuhlmann accompanied me, and, rowing ashore to an unfrequented landing-place, we caught the tram to Stamboul. Titoff was in a highly nervous state, that was increased by a German-speaking gendarme conversing with

\* *Hilal*, September 9th, 1918. *Arrestation de prisonniers anglais*. Nous apprenons que la police de Stamboul vient de procéder à l'arrestation de trois officiers anglais qui se trouvaient dans le garrison de Afion Kara Hissar et qui avaient réusé à prendre la fuite et à se réfugier à Constantinople. Ils s'étaient seigneusement cachés dans une maison à Sirkédji tenue par un certain Théodore vélédi Yani, garçon de l'hôtel Maritza. Ces officiers avaient l'intention de quitter prochainement Constantinople pour se rendre à Poti par les soins dudit Théodore qui s'était engagé à les faire évader. Les officiers anglais ainsi que Théodore, sa mère et ses deux sœurs ont été arrêtés et conduits au commandement de la place; ils seront déferés à la Cour Martiale.

Kuhlmann concerning me. In the ancient chesterfield and Bott's felt hat, I resembled a nondescript Levantine with European pretensions, and in consequence the Russians gave me as wide a berth as possible. I asked Titoff in Russian to pay the fares as I had no small notes, but he was too agitated to answer or recognise me. Finding a heavy foot treading on mine, I looked down to see the cause, at the same time as two Turkish officers who stood in front of me and whose feet had evidently received similar attention. My discomfiture was nothing to Titoff's agitation, for after humbly apologising to me and to all in the vicinity in halting Turkish, he made a feeble effort to pass off the situation jocosely.

Alighting in Stamboul, we walked into Sirkidje Place, Titoff leading, with Kuhlmann following me. A number of gendarmes and police officers were standing in groups in front of the Maritza's dingy entrance. Titoff marched boldly past the doorway, I disappeared inside, and Kuhlmann followed Titoff.

Within, woolly-fezzed gendarmes with enormous pistol holsters on their belts, sprawled at the tables. The dim low-roofed interior seemed to reek of suspicion. There was an absence of the everyday diner and the police appeared to be gathered together in anticipation of further developments or perhaps to congratulate themselves upon their success.

Choosing a vacant table, I sat down with my back to the street and beckoned a waiter. An officer of gendarmie took a seat behind me facing the street and within uncomfortable earshot. The waiter was a stranger to me so I tried him in Russian, at which he sent along another lad whom I had seen before and knew to be a friend of Theodore's. Ordering a bottle of Smyrna beer I made a whispered enquiry regarding Theodore, to which I received no reply. When the boy returned I repeated the question and was told in whispered French: "He has fallen with the three British officers." "What is his address?" I asked, for I thought of visiting the house to discover if possible if he had received our money. The waiter was nervous of further conversation, and whispering so low that the gendarme could not hear, I said: "I am a British officer myself, you need have no fear." This frightened him so much that he left me hurriedly and would not come near my table again!

Sipping my beer, I recognised an obvious police spy in plain clothes and without a fez, regarding everybody intently as he ostentatiously washed his hands at a basin at the back of the room. Feeling much as Daniel must have felt, I decided to leave at the earliest moment, but before going I was subjected to the baleful searching stare of the spy, first through narrowed eyes and then with a glare that was meant to intimidate.

Finding Kuhlmann waiting at a distant street corner, I told him the news, then followed him to meet Titoff. The latter was pleased that I had verified his story, in part at least, but when I told him that I was determined to visit Mr S—— at an office where he sometimes worked, he refused to accompany me farther.

It was my intention to find out if the cheques were actually cashed, for we were still in the dark as to their fate. A short walk brought us to a doorway which Kuhlmann said led to Mr S——'s office. On entering, I recognised a Turkish *kavass* who did occasional duty for the Dutch legation. As I realised he would ask my business before allowing me to go upstairs, I considered my disguise unsuitable since he had known me as a prisoner and might therefore ask awkward questions. After scanning the walls as if in search of a name, I returned to the street.

Titoff had disappeared, but with Kuhlmann I went to the waterfront. Hiring a *caique*, and satisfying himself the *caiquechi* knew no Russian, Kuhlmann confessed his great relief at the safe conclusion of our mission. "And in that coat, too," he chuckled, pointing to my chesterfield. "I would not leave the ship again with you in that coat. I swear there is not another like it in Turkey."

The uncertainty of our position made it imperative for us to see Mr S——. In an old uniform of the third mate's, Bott accompanied Kuhlmann to the prisoners-of-war department of the Dutch Legation, where Mr S—— was employed in the disbursal of British prisoners' parcels. Learning that S—— was away for the day, they spent the afternoon in various cafés before returning to the ship, going on their quest again the next afternoon. This time they secured admission to the building, but S—— was engaged, and after waiting twenty minutes in the waiting-room, when they with difficulty staved off the attentions of a Russian-speaking Jew who asked for a light as



a pretext for conversation, they considered it unsafe to remain.

Titoff's unpleasant concern about our finances, the uncertainty of what would happen if Theodore confessed under torture, and the unhappy thought that somebody had profited by our loss, made it urgent for us to see S——. The day following Bott's attempt, I went ashore in Kuhlmann's company once more, in a final effort to learn the truth. Partly in deference to Kuhlmann, I did not wear the decayed chesterfield, but borrowing Bott's coat and hat and shaving off an abundance of whiskers, leaving only a moustache and tuft, which I carefully darkened, I determined to confess to being an American. There were many American schools and missions dotted throughout Asia Minor, and though most Americans had left Turkey on the entry of the States into the war, I considered it feasible that some of them might have remained behind as the United States was not actually at war with Turkey.

After wending our way in procession through steep and tortuous alleys and deserted back streets to the high ground of Pera, Kuhlmann halted on a street corner near a café. Indicating a building where a big Turkish commissioner exhibited himself in the doorway, he said: "That is the Prisoners-of-War Bureau where the Turk stands. I shall wait for half an hour in this café for you, and if you have failed to return, I shall know you have been caught. Good luck."

It was Friday, the thirteenth of September, and remembering that the date of my capture was also on that ill-famed number, the fates did not seem propitious. Shrugging my shoulders at the superstition, I attempted to walk past His Magnificence. "What do you want?" he roared in Turkish. Noticing him as if for the first time, I replied in English, "I wish to see Mr S——" "What name?" he enquired in good English. "Henry O'Neill of Tarsus!" "Have you a card?" he asked in softened tones. "Yes, certainly," I replied, hunting through all my pockets in pretence. "But I can assure you it is not necessary. I am an American, and an old friend of his. If you let him know I am here he will come right down to see me." "Wait and I shall enquire," he said, turning on his heel. Nonchalantly lighting a cigarette, I endeavoured to appear indifferent to time. But he did what I expected him to do. The day was hot and he was fat and lazy. A run

upstairs would be unpleasant. After standing round the corner for a few seconds, he reappeared with a "that's quite all right. Go straight upstairs."

In the parcel room I found a dozen or more Turks, Greeks and Jews, besides four *kavasses* resplendent in silver and blue seated outside an office. Considering it unsafe to wait my turn in the queue, I decided to interview Mr S—— first. "Is this Mr S——'s office?" I asked the group in English. Assuring me that it was, one of them asked me if I wanted to see him. I replied in the affirmative, adding that my business was urgent. "You are Russian, yes?" said one. "Da," I unblushingly answered, and thinking the conversation had gone far enough, and at the same time recognising Levi, a *kavass* who had often visited Gumush Suyu, I crossed the room to try my luck with a European who was sorting parcels. "Can I see Mr S—— before those *kavasses*?" I asked. "He is engaged. Could not you call again?" was the reply, in an American drawl that almost disguised a foreign accent. "I am leaving Constantinople very soon and could not return," I truthfully replied. After learning that I answered to the name of Henry O'Neill and had recently come from Tarsus, he left me to make inquiries.

Sensing a presence at my elbow, I turned to find the obsequious Levi, who had followed me across the room. "Where did you learn to speak English?" he asked. "In Turkey," I lied cheerfully. He eyed me narrowly. "But you speak it just like an Englishman!" Seeing the futility of continuing the Russian rôle, I slapped him on the back more vigorously than he appreciated, and, taking him into my confidence, told him that I was English, and had purposely misled the other *kavasses*. My confidence pleased him, so, offering me a chair and a cigarette, he continued to cross-examine. "Did you come by yourself?" "No," I replied tersely, "my guard is waiting in the street outside," the happy thought coming to me that he was aware that occasionally prisoners had bribed their guards to remain below while they went in search of parcels in this office. Congratulating himself on his grasp of the situation, he left me to busy myself in a close scrutiny of the addresses on various parcels.

"Mr S—— will see you next," said the Dutch-American, and almost immediately a grey-haired man who was obviously

English appeared at an open door. Chancing the possibility of mistaken identity I shook him warmly by the hand while he beamed a welcome. In an undertone I told him who I was and said that I would leave at once if he would rather not talk to me. Without showing the least surprise or hesitation he invited me upstairs, where in the privacy of a closed room I told him the reason of my visit. Far from being annoyed at the risk he ran in seeing me, he expressed his pleasure at the success of my efforts, when I had put him on his guard concerning the stories I had told Levi and the commissionaire.

"I had no chance of sending you the money for the cheques," he informed me, and he then related in surprisingly quick time the whole circumstances of the cheques and many other matters that concerned us. The money was sent by a clerk who was instructed to pay it to Titoff at the Maritza. Titoff waited long and patiently for Theodore that day, but it was the day of the latter's arrest, and a Turk was watching Titoff. When the Russian left the café, he was shadowed by the Turk, who was in turn followed by the clerk. They travelled in the same subway car from Galata to Pera, where Titoff wandered aimlessly in the Taxime Gardens throughout the afternoon, followed by the Turk and the clerk, whether he sat, ate, or drank. Despairing of an opportunity to deliver the money, the clerk returned it.

"If Theodore should blab under pressure," said Mr S——, "my head will be as near the noose as his, for both Miss Whitaker\* and I have helped Yeats-Brown, Fulton and Stone. Miss Whitaker had a narrow escape as she was on her way to their hiding-place at Theodore's when the police seized them. Yeats-Brown stayed too long in Constantinople, and I want to be able to say, if you are caught in this city, that I have not helped you."

Giving me the address of a Russian friend in Odessa, and assuring me that he would send someone aboard the *Batoum* the day before she sailed, with the money, he wished us success and I left, deeply grateful and conscious of the risks he incurred on our behalf.

Highly elated, I hurried downstairs, running past the ground floor into the basement in my haste. Wishing the commission-

\* Miss Whitaker, now Lady Paul, was an English lady interned at Constantinople who did much to help British Prisoners-of-War.

aire "Good day," I set out to find Kuhlmann, after first doubling back on my tracks in case I was followed.

Kuhlmann had given me up for lost and had gone when I reached the café. Taking what seemed the shortest cut to the waterfront, I was soon lost in a tangle of narrow streets, and after much wandering had to ask my way to the Underground Station. Whilst waiting in the queue at the ticket-window, a hand was placed heavily upon my shoulder. Having endeavoured to train myself not to show surprise, I paid no heed until I had secured my ticket, when looking round I saw the smiling face of Kuhlmann.

Titoff had become more and more alarmed since Theodore's arrest and was anxious that we should leave the ship. Not caring to impart this information himself, he detailed the second mate, an uncouth ruffian, as his spokesman. We were told that within two days we must leave or the captain would be informed of our whereabouts. "We will resist being put ashore," I told him, knowing that few of them possessed fire-arms, "and if we are informed upon, on shore, we will let it be known that you and Titoff have been sheltering us. It will mean only three months in the Ministry of War for us, but for you it may mean hanging." He saw the force of the argument, and a day or two later when Josef, Feodor and Kuhlmann expressed their willingness to get us to Russia without payment, Titoff hastened to add that those were also his sentiments.

Delay followed delay in the *Batoum's* departure. The wonder was, during the thirty days we rode at anchor within bowshot of the Sultan's Palace, that we were not discovered. One and all of the crew except the senile captain knew of our presence and guessed at our story. This ancient mariner was but nominally in command of the ship, for Titoff had usurped everything but his responsibility and title. Time after time we passed him as we scurried from place to place below decks, but as he knew less of what went on than any man on the ship, I doubt if he would have suspected us even without the buccaneering striped singlets that assisted us to look as disreputable as the rest of the crew. Some of the sailors, and the majority of the firemen and greasers had been Bolsheviks, before an Austro-German army had temporarily suppressed Bolshevism in Southern Russia.

The most interesting and friendly disposed of these gentle-

men was "Bolshevik Bill." On the afternoon of the day Bott had tried to see Mr S——, I was at work with a party that was making a pretence of painting the rusty deck, when a red-headed Russian who would pass for a gigantic Highlander, opened conversation by offering me some figs—probably stolen from the cargo—which I readily accepted. Producing a Russo-French grammar, he asked if I would teach him French. Considering him a valuable ally in case of trouble on account of his stature, I agreed to instruct him to the best of my ability. His intelligence proved as limited as his knowledge of French, which consisted of the two phrases, "*Parlez-vous français?*" and "*Un peu,*" the latter being his particular favourite, and which he repeated on the slightest encouragement, accompanied by expansive grins that seemed to make his ham-like face still larger. "Bill" proved a trusty friend and a power among the crew. He frequently called on us and brought us food, and was most liberal and fraternal when drunk. Although a Bolshevik, he confessed admiration for the British, due to having served under British naval instructors with the Baltic fleet. As a proof of his fidelity, he offered to personally conduct us to his home in Moscow, and declared that no Bolsheviks would molest us, while in his company.

Unfortunately he was not a typical Bolshevik, and reformers of a different type were among his shipmates. One of these, a quarrelsome fireman who terrorised the stokehole when drunk and drew a knife on the slightest provocation, had been a commissar of Bolsheviks, and, on the ship, acted as Titoff's conspirator-in-chief in matters of blackmail and theft. Another fireman, a former sailor of the Black Sea fleet, related with evident pleasure during a jollification in the stokehole, how they had done their officers to death during the revolution and how he personally shot two officers of his own ship. I declared that I had no sympathy with their cause and certainly none with their actions. "The officers should have been granted a fair trial and not foully murdered simply because of their rank." Bill agreed with me, but went to some lengths to explain that no such thing could ever happen in the British forces, for British officers fraternised with their men, whereas Russian officers only bullied or ignored them.

After days of monotony, the Turkish merchant's cargo

began to arrive, and for two or three days cases and bales of tobacco, figs, and raisins were unloaded from sailing craft that resembled ancient galiots. Turkish stevedores, sailors and customs officials tramped the decks, and we had to lie very low, first in Josef's cabin and then in the disorderly wireless room on the boat deck. The whirring of the winches ceased at dusk, to recommence at night, when all cargo left upon the deck was loaded into the ship's boats and rowed ashore—to be sold in the bazaars by the rascally crew. Every revolution of the winches hastened our departure, but a series of holidays, for which cosmopolitan Constantinople is notorious, delayed our sailing a further week. Following the feast of *Ramazan* came the Turkish *Bairam* of three days' festivities, when the minarets were festooned with lights and the Sultan's Palace illuminated. The Mahomedan, Jewish, and Christian Sabbaths prolonged the idleness, and a Jewish fête day shortly afterwards increased the resemblance to a working man's Utopia.

Human freight accompanied the cargo in the shape of a notorious woman thief, urgently wanted by the police, who was adopted and concealed for the time being by the boatswain. Her presence was suspected by the police, and, during the last week, the ship was searched no less than five times.

For twelve days and nights we remained hidden in the wireless room, taking turns to sleep in its solitary bunk upon old sails and lifebuoys. The wireless instruments were useless from neglect, since the Germans had forbidden the use of wireless on any but ships of war.

Our chief and unending diversion was the study of Russian from well-thumbed pocketbooks, with phrases from a grammar Kuhlmann had stolen from a Bolshevik commissar on a previous voyage, as comic relief. Gems such as "Good morning, Miss Smith, how are you?" and Miss Smith's polite reply, "Pretty well, thank God," were not hard to find, and lessened the tedium.

Other diversions were the comings and goings of various craft and the panorama of the scene as we swung at our moorings, between Seraglio Point and Leander's Tower, besides occasional visits from Kuhlmann, Viktor, Josef, and "Bolshevik Bill."

At night we descended to the well deck, and walked and exercised in its confined space, for continual imprisonment in

a cramped and stuffy atmosphere had begun to tell its tale, and we were daily becoming thinner and weaker.

The monotony of the nights was relieved by four spectacular air raids and the ever-beautiful view. Gaily lit ferry boats with flashing searchlights darted across the moonlit waters. A line of brilliant lights on marble pedestals upon the water's edge illumined the Sultan's Palace, while a double blaze of electric lamps marked the Galata bridge. Lights twinkled in the city buildings, and shone star-like from minarets and mosques, all being reflected and enhanced by the rippling, shimmering waters of the Bosphorus.

The visit of the police in search of the woman thief caused concern for our safety in the wireless room, and many alternative hiding places were suggested.

One moonlight night after emerging to breathe the freer atmosphere of the well deck, we were approached by the immaculate first mate, whose birthday celebrations were in full progress. Drinking and music were the order of the day, hoarse shoutings from below and the tinkling of mandolines and singing on the upper deck denoting a liberal distribution of vodka. Troubadour-like, he gave us a song, accompanying himself on the guitar, while Kuhlmann endeavoured to amuse the company with acrobatic tricks in the rigging. Approaching us like a comic opera hero, Balaef recommended a plan for our greater safety which had been thought out during the afternoon's festivities. As soon as a police boat was seen to leave the shore, we were to dive overboard and swim to the stern of the ship, where we were to hold on to the propeller blade or the rudder until the police had given up the search. With a righteous respect for the current that swirled past the *Batoum's* battered hull, we were most modest regarding our swimming abilities, whereupon the aquatic scheme was abandoned.

A more stable though equally uncomfortable place was made known to us when we were introduced to the ship's ballast tanks. We had discussed the matter of a safer cache with Titoff and Josef, as the wireless room was overlooked from the bridge, and, unless we remained continuously on the floor, we ran considerable risk of being seen by visitors to the ship; and, no cabin being proof against police vigilance, we had therefore to accept the best alternative.

During the third week we became acquainted with our new

quarters. A police boat was seen coming towards us, whereupon Feodor piloted us to the propellor shaft tunnel, a dark and dirty alleyway between the stokehole and the ship's stern.

Removing some planks from the floor he disclosed a small manhole, and explaining that there were some thirty compartments with dividing walls connected by manholes and that it was advisable to crawl to the farthest in case the Turks flashed a light or fired a shot inside, we wriggled with difficulty into the blackness beneath. The lid was screwed down above us, the boards replaced to hide it, and, struggling through manhole after manhole that seemed scarcely larger than our heads, while squelching in mud and slime, we crawled from tank to tank.

Ballast tanks are iron compartments in the very keel of the ship, and, as their name indicates, can be filled with water for ballast. Even on a modern ship they could not be called a delectable hiding-place. On the *Batoum* they measured only two feet square by eight feet long, and reeked with the filth of years. Not a ray of light penetrated the inky blackness. We could not sit up but had to lie flat or raised slightly on our elbows. The air was dank and foul and matches burned feebly when lit. Water constantly dripped and lapped around us and the sacking we had dragged along to lie on was quickly saturated.

After half an hour's waiting that seemed an eternity, during which we wondered if the air would give out or the tanks be filled with water unknown to our irresponsible guardians, heavy footfalls echoing on the iron floor above caused us to lie even flatter. The planks were removed, the manhole unscrewed, and a light inserted. Then the welcome word *signor*, Feodor's password that the police had left the ship, came reverberating through the tanks and we knew the coast was clear.

Six times during the week, through alarms caused by the visits from the police and customs authorities, we were hidden in the tanks for periods varying from two to thirteen hours, the longest occasion being the never-to-be-forgotten day of our departure. A continued state of hiding helped us to become innured to the darkness and discomfort, and we learned to make the long hours pass by guessing at the origin of the various noises that went echoing through the ship. Our emaciated condition and constant practice in scraping through



the manholes made us expert in passing from tank to tank. We found that wherever we could insert a head and arm, our bodies could follow. Leanness had its disadvantage, however, in that, through cramp and weakness, we had invariably to be helped from the manhole into the propeller shaft.

Our hopes of departure were raised to the highest pitch when Viktor informed us that he had acted as interpreter for Titoff in the purchase of coal for the coming voyage. Incidentally Titoff had come to an honourable understanding with the Greek coal vendor, whereby a tenth of the coal bill went into his own pocket and less coal was delivered than was paid for.

During the last few days we stayed in Josef's cabin, where we were conveniently situated to dart down to the stokehole, and thence to the tanks, after Feodor had spied out the land to see that none but "Bolshevik Bill" or some other "friendly" saw us. From this cabin, which faced the aft well deck, we could watch coaling operations and study the motley passengers who came aboard.

We were expectantly waiting the arrival of the Russian whom S—— had promised to send to the *Batoum* with money, when a *caïque* containing a passenger in European dress approached the ship. To our astonishment we recognised Vladimir Vilkovsky, who, at Psamatia, had done so much to aid our escape. In Titoff's company he came below, where we warmly welcomed him. He was still making a pretence of seeking the secretaryship at the Ukrainian legation, and under that pretext had been allowed to visit Constantinople in the custody of a sentry who had become devoted to him. So convinced was the sentry of Vilkovsky's honest intentions that he would leave him at the door of the legation and return at a stated time. On this occasion the Russian had improved the shining hour by visiting S—— at his office. Hearing that a difficulty existed about our receiving the money, he offered to bring it to us. S—— told him that if we wrote new cheques in sums of ten pounds each he would cash them for us, but that he could not negotiate with the cheques he held. Straightway we wrote cheques, but hearing that Vilkovsky could not return with the money, Titoff was most anxious to accompany him.

Before they left we asked Vilkovsky if he had given the foodstuff to Titoff which we had left with him before escaping. He was shocked to hear of Titoff's perfidy, and, in his anxiety

to please us at the moment, Titoff rushed off and returned with half a tin of milk which he said he had forgotten. During his absence we asked Kuhlmann if he would go with Vilkovsky, and, on his consenting, we told Vilkovsky to send the money back to us by Kuhlmann.

Vilkovsky had intended to escape and stow away on a German ship, which his knowledge of German would have enabled him to do. "I am not ready yet," he said as he left. "Perhaps I may get a job at the Ukranian Legation. If not, I shall have to desert my trusting sentry and stow away on a Ukranian coaster that has just arrived. In that case I shall see you soon in Odessa."

Kuhlmann returned with the notes, and, much to Titoff's wrath, we refused to discuss the matter of our passage money until we were under way. That night as we slept with the notes next our skin and our revolvers handy, I heard a stealthy turning of the door handle, followed by the gradual opening of the door. Waiting till a head appeared, I pointed my pistol at it, loudly cocking it at the same time, and asking the intruder his business. There was a hurried scamper to the engine-room and we were left to guess whom our nocturnal visitor had been.

Next morning was our much longed for day of sailing, which we were to spend closed down in the tanks in order to evade a final search by the police. Before dawn we followed Josef below, and, with our revolvers, money, a bottle of water, bread and cheese, prepared for a day in the dark. To keep them dry, we kept our revolvers and food on our chests as we lay on the sodden sacking, and we ate and drank sparingly. For hours nothing happened except a disconcerting rise in the water in the tanks. The horrible suspicion that some ill-wisher might let water into the tanks, took hold of us at first. Two feet of water in these iron coffins would have drowned us and there could be no escape. But after scratching lines on the mud and timing the rise we were relieved to find by the light of a match that it was too gradual to affect us.

The chug-chugging of ferry steamers, almost imperceptible on the surface, but very audible below the water level, swelled and died away as steamers approached or departed, and, immediately following three loud blows on the iron deck, a launch drew into the gangway. The launch grated and bumped against the ship's side, and, while we lay still as death, we

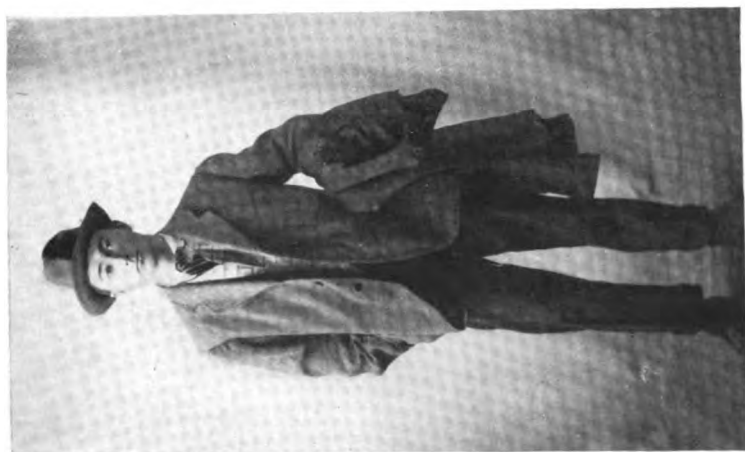
heard the Turkish police descend the stair to the engine-room, talking as they searched and tramped about in the stokehole and tunnel.

Some hours later, hearing a continuous rhythmic hissing and knocking from the engine-room we imagined that at last we were moving slowly ahead, and in fancy we could see the *Batoum* threading her way along the channel of the Bosphorus. Suddenly the knocking ceased and we realised that we were still at our old moorings between the Sultan's Palace and Leander's Tower. The knocking of the pumps was the preliminary to more convincing sounds, for about two o'clock we recognised the whirr of the forward winch; and chains rattling through the ports told us the anchor was being weighed. Then as we waited in excited impatience, sounds sweeter than the softest music came to our ears. The engine-room telegraph tinkled, and loud throbbings and pulsations and a splashing at the stern told us we were under way. Through the manhole that separated our respective tanks we shook hands warmly at the thought of leaving Turkey at last.

We calculated that by sunset we would have left Turkish waters and have entered the Black Sea. This pleasing thought and the splashing and swirling of water outside lessened the discomfort and oppressiveness of our purgatory as we patiently waited to be let out into the light of day.

Our elated spirits suffered another disappointment, however, when the telegraph rang, the rattling on deck recommenced, the anchor was let go with a splash, and the engines ceased to throb.

What had happened, we could only conjecture, and a further two hours brought us no nearer the solution until Feodor arrived at our fourteenth hour below and whispered the password. We then learned that the Turkish police had been aboard, had made a thorough search and secured nothing but the woman thief's trunk, which was probably more satisfactory than the owner, and had permitted the ship to leave. According to Turkish custom, however, outward-bound ships are searched for contraband near the mouth of the Bosphorus. The police and customs officials after searching the ship had discovered that Haschim Bey, the Turkish merchant who chartered the ship, had forgotten his papers of departure—or, more probably, had forgotten to bribe some officials. The Captain was ordered



"SERGE FEODORVITCH DAVIDOFF."



PASSPORT "SERGE FEODORVITCH DAVIDOFF."





to anchor the ship while the Turk proceeded to Constantinople in a motor car, the police remaining on board, indulging meantime in an uproarious debauch with some of the crew.

We slept for a few hours on the floor of the cabin that Feodor shared with his wife and little son. Just as dawn was breaking, disclosing an exquisite pastel of headland and sea framed by the porthole, we went below to the tanks again.

Six hours of darkness ended in a repetition of the sounds of the previous day, and when next Feodor removed the planks and lid to send the password booming along the tanks, we crawled out into the light of day to see the coast of Turkey hazy with distance over the ship's stern.

Throughout the three days' trip we remained in hiding, as, being the most important stowaways, it was necessary that our presence did not become known to the Turkish merchant, or we might find ourselves in custody before we could leave the ship at Odessa.

Twenty authorised passengers lived under an awning on the aft hatch, but unauthorised passengers, who were friends of the crew, appeared to live in almost every cabin and cupboard. Even Katrina, the slatternly kitchen wench, had adopted a Turk, though unfortunately for them both she hid him in the same cupboard as a lady friend of the skipper's, with the result that after staring fixedly at the Turk for two hours, being too alarmed even to scream, the woman fainted.

During the second day the firemen and greasers were so occupied in affairs with womenfolk in their charge, or poorer passengers, and with blackmail from those who could pay, that the furnaces were neglected and the ship made little headway. The sky was overcast and an unpleasant swell stirred the leaden sea. The propeller turned slowly and more slowly and the engines threatened to stop at any moment, while the stokers drank themselves unconscious with vodka.

On the night before our departure there had been a similar orgy, and the Bolshevik ex-commissar, after terrorising the stokehole, came with a knife in search of Josef, and was only brought to reason when a revolver was presented at his head. Borrowing my revolver, Josef again went to the stokehole, and, working throughout the night as a stoker, kept the engines going until the repentant firemen resumed work.

Next day the engines were stopped, as the decrepit Captain

found he had lost his way, and soundings proved that we were in shallow water. Bearings taken by Balaef, the first mate, showed that we had headed too far east and were shaping a course that would have brought us to the Crimea. Balaef therefore took charge and on the third night we saw the lights of Odessa and anchored outside the Mole.

We arranged a settlement for our passage early the following morning in Josef's cabin. Learning that Titoff had designed to get the whole of the money to divide as he pleased, we decided to allot it in a manner we considered more equitable, also dealing with him in the matter of the eatables he had stolen and in what he had overcharged us, by deducting it from his share. Though the rest of the syndicate—Josef, Kuhlmann and Feodor—were mortally afraid of him, they welcomed and elaborated our suggestion. It was arranged that a boat should be lowered and that Kuhlmann and Josef should accompany us ashore. Josef had fortified himself with vodka, and when Titoff was invited into the cabin and I told him how we intended to allot the money, Josef supported me strongly. Titoff was beside himself with rage, but he saw much meaning and no sympathy in the revolver I put on the table, and the row of smiling faces that confronted him. When I handed the notes to Josef for distribution, he promised to have further business with Josef. But the latter intended to leave the ship at Odessa, so laughed as he gave Titoff his share.

Discarding our seamen's clothes and packing up a kit that consisted of a revolver and toothbrush each, a razor and the bread which we kept hanging on a string from the ceiling of the cabin to guard it against a host of cockroaches, we rowed towards the docks with Kuhlmann and Josef, waving a farewell to the rueful "Bolshevik Bill."

As we neared a landing-place, I noticed Austrian soldiers on guard on jetties and buildings protected by sandbags and barbed wire. Seeing an officer placing his men to intercept us, I directed Kuhlmann's attention and we rowed away until we fell in with boats bringing passengers ashore from a coastal steamer.

Arriving at a landing-stage with one of these boats, we were not questioned, and, sponsored by the uniforms of the two ship's officers accompanying us, we passed safely through the cordons of Austrian troops at the docks, to the street.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ODESSA

**H**IRING a *droshky*, we drove to an address which Mr S—— had given me—that of M. Constantinoff, a former Russian professor at Robert Brothers' College, Constantinople. Constantinoff was absent, but his mother and sister received us warmly, although the Bolshevik upheaval had caused a reversal of their fortunes. By a strange coincidence almost as fortunate in its consequences as the railway accident on the day of my escape, two officers of the Russian Imperial Army, who arrived three days before us, occupied the flat beneath the Constantinoffs. On questioning them how to evade the Austro-German troops who occupied the town, they offered us the passports on which they had travelled from Petrograd through Bolshevik territory to Odessa.

In Moscow they had been detained as prisoners under suspicion of being officers, but the visé of the Bolshevik authorities on their passports at Petrograd carried them through. They were at home at Odessa and living under their own names, so we gladly accepted their passports. The role of a German-speaking Lett from Riga was played by Bott, with the euphonous and difficult-to-memorise name of Evgeni Nestorovitch von Genko, while my passport declared me to be a native of Turkestan, of the orthodox faith, possessed of a wife of nineteen called Anastasia, and blessed with the sonorous name of Serge Feodorovitch Davidoff.

The passports proved extremely useful in getting us rations as Russian subjects from the Austro-German army of occupation, and—once we had learned our names—a sense of safety that was hardly exceeded by the comforting knowledge that we possessed firearms.

In the little colony of Britishers in Odessa there were some who had remained throughout the horrors of the first Bolshevik



occupation. Their arms had been seized and in some cases they had been robbed with violence, but the Bolshevik leaders feared the consequences of carrying the principle of the extermination of the bourgeoisie to subjects of the Allies, and thus the lives of the Britishers were spared. Under the new régime, where Bolshevism smouldered beneath the Austro-German heel, these Britishers were nominally prisoners, having to register and report regularly to the Austrian authorities.

On enquiring the whereabouts of our countrymen, Mlle. Constantinoff remembered a tanner named Hatton, and accordingly sent a messenger to ask if he would call on her. Mr Hatton promised to do his best for us, though the unhinging effect of the revolution, and the unsettled state of affairs generally, had left him in straitened circumstances.

Bidding good-bye to Josef and Kuhlmann with many thanks and expressions of goodwill, we accompanied Hatton to his flat.\* . . . The ordinary comforts of a civilised household savoured of the luxury of a palace to our starved souls after long years of the simple life, and we bounced up and down on the upholstered divan in Hatton's flat like two-year-olds, and felt inspired to write panegyrics on table linen and easy chairs.

At the time of our arrival in Odessa the whole of the Ukraine and the towns of Southern Russia as far east as the Caucasus, were garrisoned by Austro-German forces. By financing Lenin and secretly fostering the cult of Bolshevism in Russia, Germany had succeeded in rendering Russia impotent as an enemy combatant. Lenin's *coup d'état* upset the feeble Kerensky Government that had deposed Czardom, and the peace of Brest-Litovsk that quickly followed Lenin's rise to power, crowned the efforts of German diplomacy and allowed the transfer of much-needed German and Austrian troops to the hard-pressed Western front. The result was the German offensive on the Western front, which so nearly won them the war.

But in raising the spectre of Bolshevism, Germany had brought a more insidious enemy into the field. After reducing Russia to chaos and anarchy, the dual dictators of the proletariat in their crazy obsession to communise the world turned

\* The officers and most of the *Batoum's* crew were thrown into gaol a few days after we quitted the ship. It was alleged that even the ship's anchor chains had been sold by the crew.

I was told that Titoff was killed during the subsequent Bolshevik uprising, when the mob threw open the gaols.

their attention to their closest neighbours, and Germany and Austria began to fear the effect of their handiwork.

The excesses of the "sons of the proletariat" in Great Russia had spread to the Ukraine. The mutiny of the Black Sea fleet and the massacre of officers was followed by an orgy of shooting and violence in Odessa.

The Committees of Soldiers and Workmen resolved themselves into so-called Committees of Public Safety, and under the pretext of searching for arms to prevent a counter-revolution, they robbed householders of every conceivable weapon of offence and defence, looting and killing to their heart's content. As the residents of Odessa lived principally in flats, and the *dvornik* or janitor was usually a Bolshevik sympathiser, a thorough search was not difficult.

Resistance or attempts at concealment of arms or valuables was sufficient pretext to shoot their owners. Soldiers and sailors at enmity with officers, or men who nourished grievances against others who, because of education, position, or monetary worth could be classed as bourgeois or intelligentsia, found a golden opportunity for wreaking vengeance upon them or their families. Every possible outrage was perpetrated in the name of liberty.

Though most of the Russian middle-class trembled in their homes, hoping that bribes, a reputation for inoffensiveness, or a leaning towards Bolshevism might save them, there were several instances of great gallantry on the part of those who preferred to die fighting rather than profess Bolshevism or to trust to the mercy of the propagators of the new freedom. A noteworthy fight was put up by a small band of officers and Cossacks in the streets of Odessa. Machine guns were mounted in streets and squares by the Bolsheviks, whose children even flourished revolvers. The fighting lasted for some days, ending in an armistice and the withdrawal of the unconquered little band from the city. The public burial of the sixty Bolsheviks killed in the fight was the occasion for a great demonstration and procession by the Bolsheviks.

Another instance was the defence made by eight Ukrainian officers who barricaded themselves with machine guns in the railway station, and though even the guns of the ships in the harbour were brought to bear on them, the indirect fire of the drunken gunners was so ineffectual that after inflicting severe

losses upon the attackers, the officers succeeded in making good their escape.

One Muravieff, an emissary of Lenin, in a virulent but powerful speech in the circus of Odessa, exhorted the mob to complete the extermination of the disarmed middle class, who, outside the pale of justice and in terror of their lives, appealed to their former enemies the Austrians to aid them in their extremity. Assistance was promised at the price of supplies for the impoverished Austro-German armies, and, these being guaranteed, an Austro-German force arrived in Odessa from Rumania, quickly suppressed the Reds, and, under Hetman Skoropadsky, founded the vassal Ukranian Republic.

Such was the situation when we arrived in Odessa at the end of September 1918.

Though nominally suppressed by the army of occupation, the Bolsheviks were ready to blaze out again at the first sign of weakness.

A force of twenty thousand Austrians and eleven thousand Germans was quartered in the city to maintain order and collect supplies. Guns were trained down the principal streets, squads of Austrians patrolled by night and day, and Ukranski police who bristled with firearms stood at every street corner and could kill on sight any civilians possessing firearms. Shooting in side streets and sniping of Austrian sentries was nevertheless a nightly occurrence, while wholesale robbery with violence, in which Hungarian soldiery were associated with Bolsheviks was rife. Thefts from warehouses, where the contents were taken away in motor lorries by soldiers and sold in the markets, were of common occurrence, and I knew an instance of a man who was killed for his boots.

A mighty ammunition dump on the city's outskirts was blown up by Bolsheviks with incredible damage to the surrounding country, and over two hundred Austrian soldiers perished in a fire in an adjacent barracks. When visiting this spot some days after our arrival, we saw how lightly human life was regarded when the Austrian sentries, disregarding Hatton and me, opened fire at about twenty-five yards on a party of peasant women collecting cartridge cases, and sent them screaming from the scene.

We soon realised that the problem of leaving Russia was almost as difficult as that of reaching it. A British force was

operating against the Bolsheviks on the Murmansk coast near Archangel, which we contemplated joining by crossing Bolshevik Russia. The reports of travellers soon convinced us of the impossibility of the task, for a state of chaos reigned outside those districts controlled by the forces of the Central Powers. Trains ran spasmodically, and refugees flocked to Odessa and other towns in the Ukraine to escape the marauding bands of revolutionaries which were ravaging the country. We had previously considered the possibility of travelling east to Baku, on the Caspian Sea, where a British force had recently landed. To that end we had mapped out the route, on which we were to be accompanied as far as Mariople by Josef Korotky, the third engineer of the *Batoum*. But the reported capture of Baku by the Turks, who in compensation for their loss of territory in Mesopotamia and Palestine had over-run Trans-Caucasia, forced us to abandon this plan also. Roumania lay open to us through Bessarabia, where I had an address of the relatives of a Bessarabian prisoner in Turkey, but as much of Roumania was occupied by German troops, we would have been no better off than in Odessa.

The most feasible plan under the circumstances appeared to be to join the anti-Bolshevik army, then operating in Southern Russia, and, after some service, to ask or take leave and fly eastwards to one of the Allied or Checko-Slovak ex-prisoner-of-war detachments operating in Siberia, thence to Vladivostock. This army was known as the Volunteer Army and was largely composed of ex-officers of the Imperial Army and Kuban Cossacks, and was originally founded by the patriot Korniloff. After his death in battle the command was taken by General Alexieff, who, with headquarters in Ekaterinodar, about 250 miles north-east of Odessa, commanded a formidable force of forty-eight battalions. Recruiting for this army was openly carried out in Odessa, for Germany was already beginning to fear the Frankenstein she had raised, and, though satisfied with the nation-destroying work of the Bolsheviks, she wished to draw the attention of their propagandists from Germany and Austria by engaging the fanatics in civil war. Officers on leave from the Volunteer Army could be seen in the streets of Odessa in the various uniforms of the Imperial Army.

Fate decided, for Bott was taken ill with jaundice, brought on by hardship and principally by our experience in the tanks.

While he recovered, I worked in Hatton's tannery, which he ran in conjunction with a Russo-Greek working partner and German and Jewish directors, in repayment for our meals. My fellow-workers, to whom I was introduced as a refugee from Petrograd, were either repentant Bolsheviks or penniless officers, and as I trimmed hides brought from the smoke room or tacked others upon boards, I had to call upon my imagination to answer questions fired at me regarding the price of boots, cost of food and clothes and the latest doings of the Bolsheviks, and in fact how the world wagged generally in a city I had never seen.

It was unfair to Hatton to remain at his flat, as he had regularly to report to the Austrians, and would have been imprisoned had it been known that he was harbouring two escaped officers. Vladimir Franzovitch Berlinovsky, a poor Ukrainian Lieutenant of Artillery, who had lost his all in the revolution, was known to both Mdlle. Constantinoff and Hatton. After some days at Hatton's, we transferred to his flat in the Bolshevik quarter. He lived in daily fear of being assassinated, and out of the goodness of his heart, and because we owned pistols, he was glad to have our company. His quarters consisted of two small but tidy rooms, in one of which the three of us slept on camp beds, the other being occupied by his mistress.

The janitor of the flats was an old N.C.O. of the Imperial Guard, whom nothing would have tempted to betray us. Our host told him that we had escaped from Moscow, and, upon the production of our passports, he secured a daily allowance of bread and tea from the Austrian Commissariat for Evgeni Nestorovitch von Genko and Serge Feodorovitch Davidoff.

By day our bedroom served as an office where Vladimir Franzovitch performed some intermediary duties in the matter of supplies between the Ukrainian army such as it was, and the Austrians.

We made Hatton's our headquarters, where we called each day to learn the latest news, to eat, saw wood, and do odd jobs for Hatton's Russian wife.

During a month in Odessa, while seeking a way to leave the country, we spent our time in various ways, appearing openly in the streets, and, while avoiding conspicuousness, gradually increased our circle of acquaintances. On one occasion we

attracted more attention than was welcome, for when Bott had recovered sufficiently to accompany Hatton and me on a bathing expedition at Longeron, where as at other Russian watering places a bathing suit is superfluous, we discovered when we reached the beach that Bott's entire body had turned a deep saffron through jaundice, a state of affairs which interested the onlookers!

Soon after our arrival, when lack of funds and information found us with time on our hands, seated under the trees of the beautiful terraced boulevard that overlooks the harbour, I suggested a visit to the museum. Bott prudently pointed out the unnecessary risk, but ultimately we went, and on entering were approached by an Austrian sentry. Giving him our hats (I was wearing a borrowed hat and coat of Hatton's), we passed on, only to be stopped by a second soldier, guarding the visitors' book. With an I-told-you-so look, Bott squared his shoulders and signed his Lettish alias with a flourish that would have pleased its rightful owner, while I tried to do justice to the name of Davidoff. The exhibits were few and badly assorted, the most interesting items being some relics of the Turkish occupation, and after rubbing shoulders with German officers at every turn, and entertaining ourselves by palming the guides upon each other, we decided, once we had regained our hats and the street, that we would avoid such places in future, even though they had the attraction of being free.

Hatton introduced us to another Britisher named Waite, who had spent a lifetime in Russia and was acquainted with most of the officers of the Mercantile Marine in Odessa. In tête-à-tête at his flat and the cafés we learned of a notorious member of the British colony, one Pat O'Flaherty.

O'Flaherty had been on the staff of the Eastern Telegraph Company, and being over age for service had stayed in Odessa during the Bolshevik and Austro-German occupations. He was the boon companion of Louis Demy, skipper of the steamer *Nikolaïeff* (who later assisted us in escaping to Bulgaria), and was renowned for his hare-brained escapades during twenty-five years' residence in the city. "I met Pat yesterday," said Waite. "He said he would like to meet you. He was carrying a carpet under his arm, and when I asked him if he were trying to sell it, he said he had turned Musselman and always carried a prayer carpet now."

We found Pat's companionship far from being monotonous, and certainly amusing. His passport showed him to be an "Irish" subject, but he hastened to assure us that this wording was owing to the ignorance of Russian officialdom, and not through any rebel leanings. An Army discharge, in which "striking his superior officer" was his most serious indiscretion, more or less bore this out.

While making arrangements for our ultimate departure from Russia, we frequently met Pat or sought him out at the café that was his favourite haunt. To his various acquaintances who bartered and sold and made paper fortunes over cups of coffee at the café tables, Pat introduced us according to his humour of the moment, so that we had to be prepared to fill any rôle. On one occasion we were Jewish cinema showmen who had come to Russia to evade the conscription in England. Later we were travellers for a Coventry firm of motor car manufacturers and could quote for automobiles complete in every detail except for tyres. Anon we were traders in furs, and, introducing Bott as M. Califatti to an unctuous English-speaking Jew who joined our group, he described in minute detail a valuable coat made from four skins which Bott was anxious to sell at a great reduction as it was slightly moth-eaten!

Pat kindly undertook to get me an old coat from a friend (a suit of clothes cost a hundred pounds), as I possessed only the chesterfield and Hatton's borrowed coat. During the process of obtaining the garment I seriously thought that the best tailor-made would have been cheap in comparison.

The appointment with his friend was fixed for six o'clock, and, for fear of losing the coat, we were the unwilling companions of Pat's pranks throughout a long afternoon. Accompanying him to a new café, we arrived in time for the opening ceremony and a liberal share of holy water that was being freely distributed by a long-haired priest with a whitewash brush. Pat as usual showed his contrariness by ducking from the water which others were so eager to receive, as he declared it unlucky. His acquaintances were many and varied. A wealthy Russian Jew, whom he declared he had taught English, he invited to our table, asking him to display his knowledge of our mother tongue. To our surprise and Pat's satisfaction, we found that his vocabulary consisted solely of oaths.

Unfortunately Pat further distinguished himself by imbibing unwisely, and, after we had with difficulty restrained him from jumping among a tempting pile of crockery, and the waiter had tried every hat in the cloak room on his head, as he declared his had been stolen, he finally drew forth his own from his pocket and we managed to get him into the street. A procession of German troops that was meant to impress the inhabitants only gave him scope for amusing and ribald remarks, until we threatened to leave him. Not knowing the address of his friend, we had to support our Brugglesmith on a no-enviable journey through miles of dark streets in the Bolshevik quarter, while he sang uproariously of the invincibility of the O'Flahertys. Having at last secured the coat, which though many sizes too big was most welcome, we returned Pat to his lodgings, accepting his invitation to stay the night.

The stove and walls of his apartments were riddled with bullet holes, and on enquiring their origin we learned that there had been no romantic indoor battle, but that a Russian friend and kindred spirit when drunk, had the playful habit of indulging in target practice with his revolver before retiring.

About two weeks after leaving the *Batoum*, Vilkovsky suddenly appeared, having escaped and stowed away on another steamer. His father being a well-known barrister in the city and an uncle holding a responsible ministerial post in the Ukrainian government, he had come into his own again. Being personally acquainted with the Commissar of the Volunteer Army he undertook to arrange our inclusion in one of the parties of ex-officers leaving for Novorissisk, but before the arrangement was made he had to go on a visit to Kieff. On his return he was stricken with Spanish influenza which at the time was making great ravages among the overcrowded and underfed population.

By this time our resources were reduced to a very low ebb. We were reluctant to accept food without payment and frequently made our meals at pie stalls on street corners.

It was a consolation to hear that the Dutch Consul was friendly, and after an early morning call at his office we left his genial presence the richer by four thousand roubles, the money being available from a Foreign Office fund and later repaid by us.

Such affluence enabled us to treat O'Flaherty and Louis Demy

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to a good dinner (which cost us the equivalent of ten pounds per head), and further induced us to engage a box at the opera, to which we invited Vilkovsky in return for so many kindnesses.

The date coincided with the departure of a number of ex-officers to Novorissisk to join the Volunteer Army which General Denekine had lately taken over upon the death of Alexieff. When Vilkovsky brought us this news, we debated whether we should forego the opera. . . . The opera won, and we enjoyed an incomparable rendering of Boris Goudenoff at the world-renowned Opera House. Next day we learned that trains might not run again for weeks to Novorissisk. . . .

Rumours of the withdrawal of the Austrian garrison caused the Bolsheviks of Odessa to raise their heads once more and the civil population to tremble. The newspapers, though heavily censored, contained daily confirmation of a great allied advance on the Western front and the rumours of an impending armistice with Bulgaria.

Hearing from Waite that the Austrians had sanctioned the despatch of the hospital ship *Euphrat* to Varna, to bring back released Ukranian prisoners, we enlisted the services of Louis Demy to obtain particulars, as the prospect seemed better than our chance of leaving Russia via the Volunteer Army and Siberia.

As Demy was acquainted with the skipper of the ship he arranged that we should slip aboard the night before sailing, and, so that the captain might know us, we loitered in the neighbourhood of the shipping office while Demy from inside pointed us out to him.

There was an interval of ten days before sailing, during which first Bott and then I developed influenza, which with alarming casualties was scourging the whole of Southern Russia. We dared not remain indoors at Vladimir Franzovitch's quarters by day, and had therefore to content ourselves with aspirin treatment, sitting in the sun in the city parks.

The news of Allied successes that was posted on the notice board at Austrian headquarters from day to day, heartened us exceedingly, the expressions of the German and Austrian troops as they realised they were losing acting as an excellent tonic.

A growing truculence was noticeable in the Bolshevik quarter, where poor Franzovitch was at all times scowled upon,

and revolutionary songs sung as he passed. It became an open secret that in three days the Bolsheviks intended to rise, drive out the Austrians, and continue the extermination of the bourgeoisie. The Consul of Soviet Russia was reported to have spent enormous sums in propaganda, and it was rumoured that among the thousands that had flocked to Odessa as a last refuge against Bolshevism—increasing its population from five hundred thousand to over a million—were numerous well-armed Bolsheviks who were merely waiting the propitious hour to declare themselves.

A raid was made on the Soviet offices and the Consul and about two hundred of his followers whose names were found on lists in his keeping were arrested, and a number executed.

This action merely postponed the holocaust. Austrian guns were trained down the principal streets and a parade of volunteers willing to fight the Bolsheviks took place on the Puskinskaya Boulevard, at the invitation of Ukrainian Army headquarters. About two thousand ex-officers responded to the call, but not more than five hundred would sign the necessary documents, knowing full well that the list might serve another purpose.

We visited Ukrainian Headquarters with Vladimir Franzovitch, and learned of a small fort being constructed on the outskirts of the city, where, with three or four guns and insufficient rifles, a number of desperate officers were determined to fight to the last man.\* An invitation was extended to us to aid in its defence, or alternatively help to man a gunboat where only a portion of the crew was Bolshevik. We agreed to go where we would be of most use, provided we were still in Odessa.

The bourgeoisie for the main part remained in unorganised inaction. At Robinar's, Franconi's and the Café Suisse, speculators who cornered commodities that ranged from tea to stolen forage and equipment bought from soldiers of the garrison, still made fortunes in a day, while ragged crowds that watched them haggling at the café tables talked of pogroms and a speedy return to Bolshevism.

Consignments of goods were sold and re-sold many times

\* On the arrival of the Franco-Greek force from Salonika after the Austro-German troops were withdrawn, the bodies of a number of unidentified officers were found in a fort outside the town, where they had endeavoured to hold out against the Bolsheviks. These were no doubt our Ukrainian Army friends, who were so loyal to us during our stay in Odessa.

before they reached the retailer. The money thus made was often spent as quickly as it was gained in endless feasting and revelry, in the hope of blotting out thoughts of the tragedy of the future, which sober application and energetic organisation might have averted.

There was good reason for fear. "Yahblotchkaw," a revolutionary song perpetuating the ghastly incident of the cruiser *Almaz*, could be heard in any street in the Bolshevik quarter, and a repetition of the officer hunts, indiscriminate looting and murder during the last period of Bolshevik ascendancy, could only be expected.

The incident of the cruiser *Almaz* had been related to me by the ship's firemen on the *Batoum*, and after questioning both Russians and Englishmen who were in Odessa at the time, I have every reason to believe it true.\*

Vilkovsky and Franzovitch were pessimistic and depressed. "From to-morrow I shall cease to shave and wear collars," said Vilkovsky.

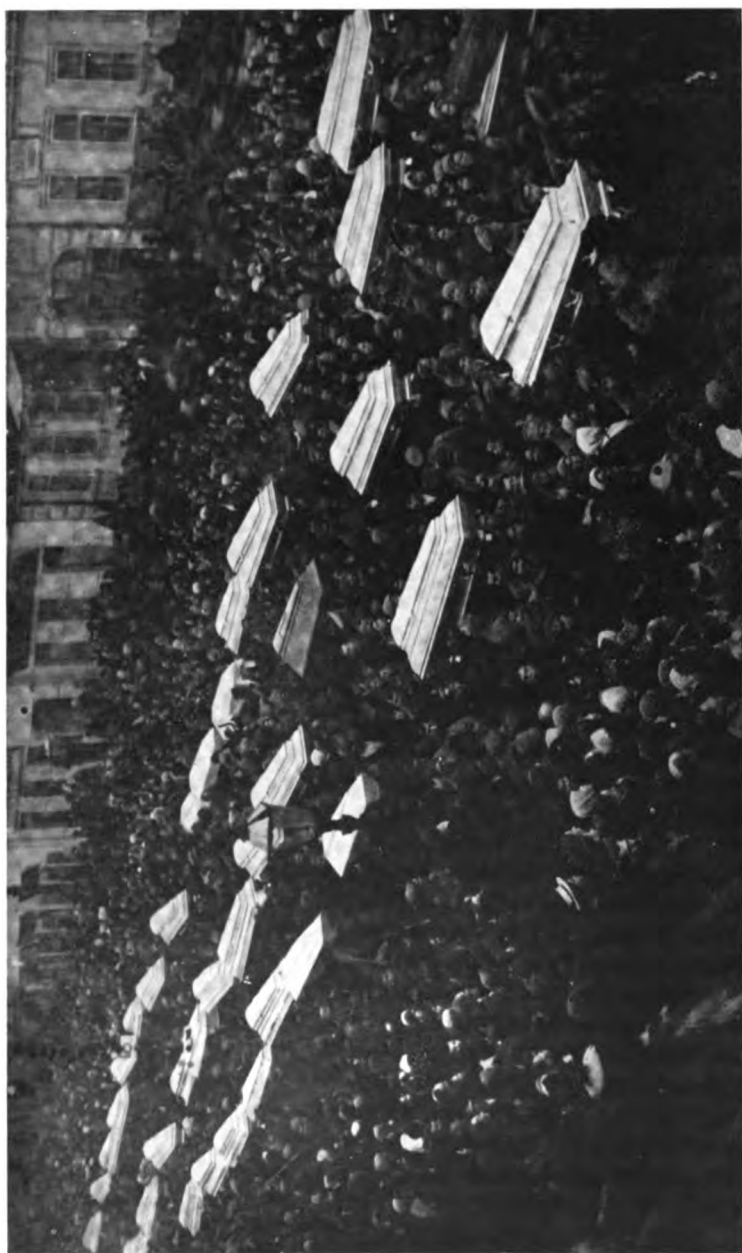
Vladimir Franzovitch saw no hope for Russia, except by generous Allied assistance to the Army under General Denekine. We had attended his mother's funeral, carrying his little son during a long walk, and his feelings, together with the black horizon, prompted him to bitterly denounce the destroyers of his country. As a patriot who had fought and been decorated in the Japanese War as well as in the Great War, he felt the position keenly. The second overrunning of the Ukraine by Red troops and a second setting up of Soviet rule would, he declared, be a set back from which the country would take generations to recover. Where everything was nationalised, industry could

\* After a gradual undermining of discipline in the Black Sea fleet by Bolshevik agitators, the sailors of the fleet mutinied, took their officers prisoner, and shelled Odessa, though without doing any damage to the city owing to the drunkenness of the gunners. About four hundred naval and military officers and prominent citizens of Odessa were taken aboard the *Almaz*, the flagship of the fleet, where they were given a mock trial by a tribunal of sailors. Sentences of "hot baths" and "cold baths" were freely given and carried out. A "cold bath" meant being thrown overboard with weights attached to the feet, and a "hot bath" meant being bound to planks and stoked into the ship's furnaces. This last was mainly reserved for the officers of the fleet.

Officers came to be known in Odessa as "Yahblotchkaws" (wildapples) from a music hall song of that name with a marching air that was parodied to supply words for a Bolshevik Marseillaise that was sung in the way of a taunt. A literal translation of the stanza dealing with the *Almaz* incident is as follows:—

Yahblotchkaw, yahblotchkaw,  
Where art thou rolling to  
Shouldst thou fall on the *Almaz*  
Thou shalt not return.

Mention of this incident is also made in E. H. Keeling's "Adventures in Turkey and Russia."



BURIAL OF BOLSHEVIKS KILLED IN STREET-FIGHTING IN ODESSA.



not long survive. The teachings of the demagogues who advocated "Freedom of Mind and Body" fell mainly upon the fertile soil of ignorance, and led to exterminative excesses upon the bourgeoisie, who were the life-blood of the country. Yet he showed no hatred for the men whom he knew would kill him in the obsession of their class hatred, simply deploring their ignorance and asking that we should explain to our own people the necessity for help for the anti-Bolshevik armies.

And as a patriot he died. For since the armistice we have heard that Vladimir Franzovitch met his death while gallantly fighting for his country's honour. . . .

At this eventful time the wildest rumours were current. The Bulgarian armistice was an established fact and the cessation of hostilities in that country meant the isolation of Turkey by rail from her Austrian and German allies. General Allenby's advance in Palestine and further Allied victories in France were reported, buoying up the hopes of those who anticipated Allied help against the Bolshevik menace.

A rumour grew that a French force was marching from Bulgaria to Odessa, and it was repeatedly reported that the British Fleet had forced the Dardanelles. Crowds assembled daily on the Puskinskaya Boulevard searching the horizon for the ships of their deliverers. Greater activity of patrols and ostentatious parades of Austro-German troops were evident—a camouflage for the departure of troops to Austria and Germany and an attempt to insulate the troops from the secret propaganda of the Bolsheviks which was already tainting the discipline of the forces.

One night we were stopped by an Austrian sentry, but rightly guessing that he would have some loot to sell I asked him what price he wanted, whereupon with a grin he produced a large box of the vilest cigarettes I have ever smoked, which I gladly purchased for twice their value.

We spent the last few days before our departure in tabulating information regarding the numbers and location of the Austro-German forces, the situation of their dumps and stores, number of ships, the addresses of sympathisers, and useful data regarding the Bolsheviks. Then bidding Hatton, Vladimir Franzovitch and our other friends good-bye, we met Louis Demy and Pat O'Flaherty at night, going by unfrequented streets to the docks. The *Euphrat* was berthed at the quay and picqueted by

Austrian sentries. In the shadows we waited our opportunity to board her unobserved. It soon came. A number of ragged Bulgarian peasants proceeded to mount the steerage gangway, and as they did so we walked past the sentry on the other gangway.

Demy found a member of the crew with whom he was acquainted, and after being hidden in an unused cabin, our friends left us with fervent good wishes. They will always have ours!

Next morning, through the porthole, we saw Odessa of the fine streets and crescent harbour blur into distance. We could only vainly conjecture its fate.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE HOME TRAIL

**I**T had been reported that Varna had recently been occupied by British troops; and once well at sea we considered we were near the end of our adventure. This was cause for congratulation, as we were both still suffering from influenza, and I from pleurisy as well, although I did not know it at the time.

A continued state of vigilance led us to take a watchful interest in our fellow passengers, and we soon discovered that we were not the only persons travelling incognito, though as far as we knew we were the only ones not registered in the ship's books.

It transpired that a tall bearded Russian, alleged to be travelling with a mercantile captain and marine engineer to Varna, to bring back a Russian ship, was one of Denekine's generals, en route to Salonika to seek allied help for the anti-Bolshevik army. The equally shabby engineer was a Naval Captain who was accompanying the General. The latter's fall from high estate was great, for he told us that a year previously he had carried as passengers on his cruiser\* from Sebastopol to Odessa, the first three escapees from Turkey, who, as mentioned in Chapter XIII, escaped from Kastamoni, reaching Russia shortly before the revolution. A third and equally retiring passenger was a former Russian Naval lieutenant, who, after some months' spying in the Naval dockyards of Sebastopol, was hastening to make known to the British the number of ships, submarines and men at the Germans' disposal. Others, whose acquaintanceship we did not seek, were a more con-

\* The flagship *Almas*, on which the Odessa atrocities were perpetrated.



spicuous party of Bulgarian officers returning to humiliated Bulgaria after a consultation with Austro-German authorities in the Ukraine.

An uneventful voyage that yielded nothing more exciting than the appearance of occasional drifting mines, ended in our arrival at the miniature harbour of Varna on the morning of the third day. A German seaplane came out to meet us, and a Bulgarian destroyer escorted us through the mine-fields, but when we anchored, the port authorities ordered the ship into quarantine for five days, owing to the cholera and influenza outbreak in Odessa. Tugs towing lighters appeared and commenced embarking the passengers for a noisome looking barracks that served as quarantine station. Disliking the prospect of further life in barracks, and being fearful of betrayal by the Bulgarians on board, we hid among the lifeboats until the disembarkation was completed.

Making our presence known to the Captain of the ship, we sent a collective note to the British authorities, but receiving no reply, had a boat lowered, and with the three Russians and the mercantile skipper went ashore and made our way to the office of a newly-arrived French Naval detachment which had come overland immediately Bulgaria had sued for an armistice. Here we bade good-bye to the Russians and were allotted a guide to take us to the Hotel London, where a party of Britishers was quartered.

On the way we saw two khaki-clad Tommies, well fed and care free, trotting proudly through the streets. In our scarecrow clothes and paper parcels of belongings, we stood and watched them with mixed feelings—the finest symbol of freedom that we had seen.

After handing in our reports on the situation in Odessa to Intelligence, we were introduced to the mess of the ten officers, who, with fifty men of the Durham Light Infantry, composed the garrison of the town, where they had arrived a day or two before. We were warmly received after preliminary doubts—well warranted by our tramp-like appearance,—and after establishing our identity principally by a knowledge of army slang, we were given two welcome blankets from the scanty clothing store. Hearing that a column was marching on Constantinople and another was detailed to go to Southern Russia, we applied to return to duty.

We were told that in the first place there were no uniforms for us, and Brigadier-General Ross, commanding the garrison, pointed out that our wisest plan was to return to Salonika for hospital or a few weeks' leave, and then to apply to headquarters.

At dawn on the third day we left by train for Sofia in company with two Italian officers who had escaped from captivity in Vienna, and after encountering enormous difficulties in crossing Austria and Roumania and being once re-captured, had eventually arrived at Varna the same day as ourselves.

The railway took us through peaceful fields and idyllic orchard and forest country "in autumn's russet mantle clad," while the two Italians, the two pseudo-Britishers and two Tommies that formed our strangely assorted party, talked, slept or ate bully beef and biscuits during a twenty hours' ride.

Dawn disclosed the historic hills of Plevna, reminding us of Osman Pasha's famous stand against the Russians, and some hours later the pleasant countryside gave way to the squalid outskirts of the Bulgarian capital.

Carrying swags like Australian sundowners, we wandered through the streets of Sofia to British Headquarters. The Bulgarians had anything but the air of a beaten race, and from conversation with some officers we met at Varna they hinted that they had merely changed sides during the conflict owing to their differences with Turkey. On the train two unusually truculent officers had attempted to have us removed from the first-class compartment, but we experienced great satisfaction in having them ejected instead.

Our extreme shabbiness was a continued drawback. After our third request to see the Chief of Intelligence at the British Mission in Sofia, the orderly informed him that two non-descripts who *said* they were Britishers wanted to see him. Intelligence and the polite, neatly-dressed Staff Officers tried their hardest not to laugh at us, but were overcome at the sight of my over-sized cream-coloured waistcoat with green checks, given me by O'Flaherty's friend.

We were asked for and supplied lengthy reports, before setting out to see the M.O. and the sights of the city.

To see Sofia's wonderful Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky was part repayment for some of our bitter experiences. In general appearance it is faintly reminiscent of St. Sophia, but

on a smaller scale that is more lavishly Byzantine. Domes melting one into another seem to cluster cloud-like above the sacred pile, while numerous stained-glass windows and Roman arches illumine its gorgeous interior. Above all, the beautiful mural paintings bear comparison with anything of the kind in the world.

Twenty-four hours of Sofia and its sullen people was quite sufficient for tourists such as we, though had I the imagination of a Foster Fraser perhaps I could fill a chapter with its praises.

Early next morning we left by motor for Salonika, in company with a car carrying the Russian spy we had met on the *Euphrat*, also a Russian-speaking British Intelligence officer. All day as we wound through wooded uplands to the summit of the Balkans, we passed grey columns of tired French troops and their Senegalese and Tonkinese Colonials, stepping out bravely to reach the goal for which they had fought so long.

Soon we were scurrying through the famous Kreshna and Rupel passes, near the renowned Shipka Pass where, in the Russo-Turkish war, some of the fiercest fighting took place. Only a few weeks before, the defeated Bulgarian Army, retiring upon the capital, was caught in these mountain passes by British aeroplanes. As they defiled between precipitous crags or along roads cut in the mountain side from which there was no escape, both ends of the columns were attacked with deadly accuracy by bombs and machine gun fire from aeroplanes that arrived and departed with amazing regularity. Fearful havoc and indescribable panic must have ensued, for we passed numberless twisted and charred waggons and gun limbers, the swollen and mangled carcasses of horses, and abandoned guns and motor lorries that lolled in precarious positions upon the brink of precipices.

We stayed the night at Sveterack, a little town that had served as headquarters for the Second Bulgarian Army. During the two years of their stay, the Bulgars and their German Staff officers had made themselves comfortable, a hot spring being covered in and converted into a combined swimming and Turkish bath. Bungalows had been erected and pleasant lawns and flower gardens planted in what formerly was a wilderness. Some British officers on line-of-communication duty were enjoying the fruits of their adversary's labours, and we in turn

benefited by their hospitality and in the novel luxury of a bath.

Our stay also added to the extent of our worldly possessions, for a kindly-disposed subaltern presented us with two Bulgarian sandbags, by way of portmanteaux, so that we could dispense with our paper parcels.

Once away from the maze of Bulgarian trenches in the foothills of the Balkans, we entered Macedonia by the valley of the Stroumna.

In this broad and desolate basin the opposing armies had faced each other, month after month, until the Allied offensive along the whole line and the rapid march of events that followed, led to the Bulgarian débâcle and armistice. Battered villages and rows of winding trenches marked the scene of many a stubborn fight that had not infrequently ended in a withdrawal on account of the ravages of malaria.

Fighting in their own country, the Bulgars made full use of their knowledge of the unhealthy conditions of the valleys, by retiring during the summer to elevated positions in the foothills rather than incur the risks of fever in the valley.

“It is fever, and not fight—  
Time, not battle—that slays.”

The Greek Army, looking disconsolate and miserable, still bivouacked on the ground they had held so long, being forbidden in the terms of the armistice to advance into Bulgarian territory. And if the report of Greek atrocities perpetrated in the Balkan War be true (which were enumerated in a Bulgarian pamphlet I read at Varna), the Greek is as capable of cruelty in war as his Bulgarian neighbour.

Leaving this arid No Man's Land, which in spite of its barrenness has been a veritable Tom Tiddler's ground since the days of Alexander, we climbed away from the river, entering pleasanter country that in its neatness showed the unmistakable hand of the Britisher. A ribbon of smooth white road wound by easy stages over the hills, overlooking comfortable camps and orderly billets that testified to British thoroughness, and before dusk we were rattling through the streets of Salonika.

Until we were able to obtain uniforms, our disreputable appearance led to further amusing incidents. On reporting at

British Headquarters at Salonika, a Tommy strenuously opposed our entry until we were vouched for by the Intelligence officer who travelled with us from Sofia. After delivering further and final reports to Intelligence concerning guns, troops, dépôts, addresses and Bolshevik data at Odessa, we were emerging together when an indignant London Tommy asked us what we meant by leaving by the officers' entrance . . . That night, in spite of our clothes, we were the guests at dinner of the Air Chief, Sir John Salmond, after which we went for lodging to the officers' Rest House. The N.C.O. in the office admitted us reluctantly on our signed certificates of identity, and then only after testing our English. "You're the Greek caterer's sons, aren't you?" said another. "We heard you were coming."

A stay at the Rest House was limited to three days, at the end of which time we found our sandbags placed carefully outside our doors. Notwithstanding the regulations we secured re-admission on three separate occasions by applying while a different clerk was on duty, and again when, as Bott puts it, "we were metamorphosed by ordnance uniforms from third-class scarecrows into regulation pattern officers."\*

When returning from the clothing store with the beginnings of our uniforms, we enquired the way to Royal Air Force H.Q. from an R.A.F. recruit who had been celebrating. "You don't mean to say you're going to enlist, do you?" he enquired thickly. "Here, boys, come and see what's going to join the Air Force," he called to his companions. Then, shaking an unsteady finger at us paternally, he remarked, "Take my advice. Don't you join the Royal Air Force. We're a bad lot."

Some days before the Armistice was officially announced, in the garden of the Rest House a highly elated Tommy batman, mistaking me in my hand-me-down clothing and never-to-be-forgotten waistcoat for one of the Greek labourers, slapped me heartily on the shoulder and in the pidgin-French of the troops of Salonika proclaimed, "La guerre est fini, Johnnie!"

. . . AND THEN IT CAME—to the accompaniment of gunfire from warships in the harbour and rattling of musketry

\* "Eastern Nights and Flights" by "Contact" (Alan Bott).

in the streets—less than two weeks after our arrival in Salonika.

Selfishly we wished the end had not come quite so soon, for our thousand-mile journey seemed almost in vain, though it was some small satisfaction to know that we had outwitted the wily Turk.

Salonika gave itself up to a revelry that consisted principally of breaking bounds, unrestrained fraternisation of the French, Serbian, Greek, Italian, Russian and British troops, and nocturnal celebrations at the White Tower and Bertha's Bar—landmarks better known to British troops than the arch of Theodosius.

The expedition planned for Southern Russia proved to be a Franco-Grecian one, and as our chances of inclusion were small on that account, we asked to be sent to England.

After being ordered to wait upon the G.O.C., General Sir George Milne,\* for congratulations,—thereby missing a boat for the honour which entailed a further week's wait,—we at last left squalid Salonika, with its mud, its varied history, and its heterogeneous inhabitants.

From Cairo we paid a flying visit to the Holy Land,—not with any wish to renew acquaintanceship with the Turk, but Bott to search records for material for another book† that was to add to the fame of "Contact", and I in a desire to visit the birthplace of Christianity and to seek old friends among the Australian Flying Corps.

On the war-built Sinai desert railway we crossed the scene of Moses' wandering in a night, and woke at battered Gaza. At Ramleh we parted to meet again in London and New York on a further phase of our Odysseys.

To a lover of history, especially an Australian, the landmarks of the ages are of intense interest. With fellow-countrymen from the A.F.C. at Ramleh, I motored through the orange groves to Jaffa; then following a road older than history, through boulder-studded hills overlooking the Jordan valley, we entered the Holy City by the break in the walls made for the vainglorious Wilhelm.

After the Holy Sepulchre and the Mosque of Omar (built

\* Now Field Marshal Sir George Milne.

† "Eastern Nights and Flights."

by the Moslem conqueror on the site of Solomon's temple), one remembers most the sickly, long curled local Jews, so unlike their European brethren, and the calm and repose of the Garden of Gethsemane.

The memories of Bethlehem were mainly sacrilegious, for, after emerging from the Church of the Nativity, an exceedingly fat and odious Armenian shopkeeper so far importuned us as to force olive wood and mother-of-pearl souvenirs into our hands at prices which he declared meant ruin to him. As he was loth to take them back, nothing remained but to drive off with the vendor in hot pursuit. Yet even a perspiring half-mile run left him with sufficient breath in his body to flatter our honesty for eventually returning the goods, in a last despairing effort to sell them.

In Cairo I met many of my former fellow prisoners who had been repatriated after the Turkish armistice and had reached Egypt with much less trouble and expense.

Memories of my Eastern Odyssey, of flights in Mesopotamia, captivity and the sordidness of Turkish things in Baghdad and lesser cities, the monotony and the friendships of Afion Kara Hissar, the plots and intrigues of Constantinople, the sojourn in Russia and the journeying that ended in Egypt, receded into the dead littleness of yesterday, when I left Port Said for England via Marseilles.

Paris was en fete for the visit of President Wilson, and in the truly Parisian manner was lionising the man of the moment.

London was more conspicuously than ever, the Mother City of the Empire. Its khaki-clad population was swelled by the troops of every Dominion and a representative of each could be found in every fifty passers-by in Whitehall or the Strand. Scarcely a day passed without meeting at theatres, in restaurants or on bus tops, the companions of one's war-time dramas.

Hill, in smart R.A.F. uniform, looked totally different from the shaven fanatic I had seen in Constantinople, and was able to tell me the complete story of his spooking and shamming. Yeats-Brown, on leave before returning to India, appeared more at home with motor and monocle in Mayfair than languishing as a prisoner in Mosul. Fulton and Stone returned to Constantinople in official capacities, and Paul became a gen-

darmerie chief at Damascus before returning to his native Ireland. By making good use of his time at Afion, Jordan's knowledge of Turkish assisted him to a Consular position, to which service Palmer also returned. And so on, and so on . . .

Others of us scattered to the four corners of the earth, took up the threads of pre-war civil life, in my own case, after an interesting industrial education in England and America.

The trivial task, the common round of business life in Australia with its post-war problems and perplexities, and the pleasing sense of comfort and security in familiar surroundings, have relegated the experiences of five years to the region of "once upon a time", leaving only on the tablets of the memory the vivid consciousness of blank years, of warm friendships formed,—and the poignant sense of loss of those who "shall not return to us, the resolute, the young."

### AFION KARA HISSAR

(By kind permission of the "New York Times" and "Sydney Bulletin.")

I wonder if the days are still  
The same! If, round the summit of the hill  
Whose castled top we learned to know  
While prisoned near its stony base,  
The storks and whirring kestrels go?

And if the almond trees have flow'ered  
Again, within that glade, all leaf-embow'ered,  
Where fig, and vine, and olive-trees,  
The anodyne of changeless lives,  
Stretched tender fingers to the breeze?

Or in the sordid, straggling town,  
Asleep, with minarets among the brown  
Of squalid huts, like candles set  
In vigil on a sea of sand—  
If hunger is its tenant yet?



And cypresses that shadowed all  
The turbaned tombs, and o'er the mould'ring wall  
Their slender, sombre spires sway—  
Do they, and groups of widows, too,  
Still sigh the endless hours away?

And have the poppy fields, that blaze  
White patches on the ground, planned out their maze  
Again upon the plain that lies  
Outspread in chequered patchwork, fenced  
By minaret-supported skies?

And do the wand'ring flocks that spread  
Unchecked, like wind-blown blossom petals shed  
Upon the bare hill face—do they  
Still fleck the hill, while to the skies  
The shepherd sings his savage lay?

T. W. W.

THE END









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